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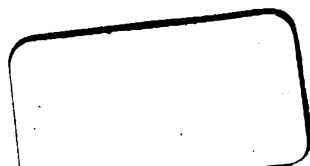
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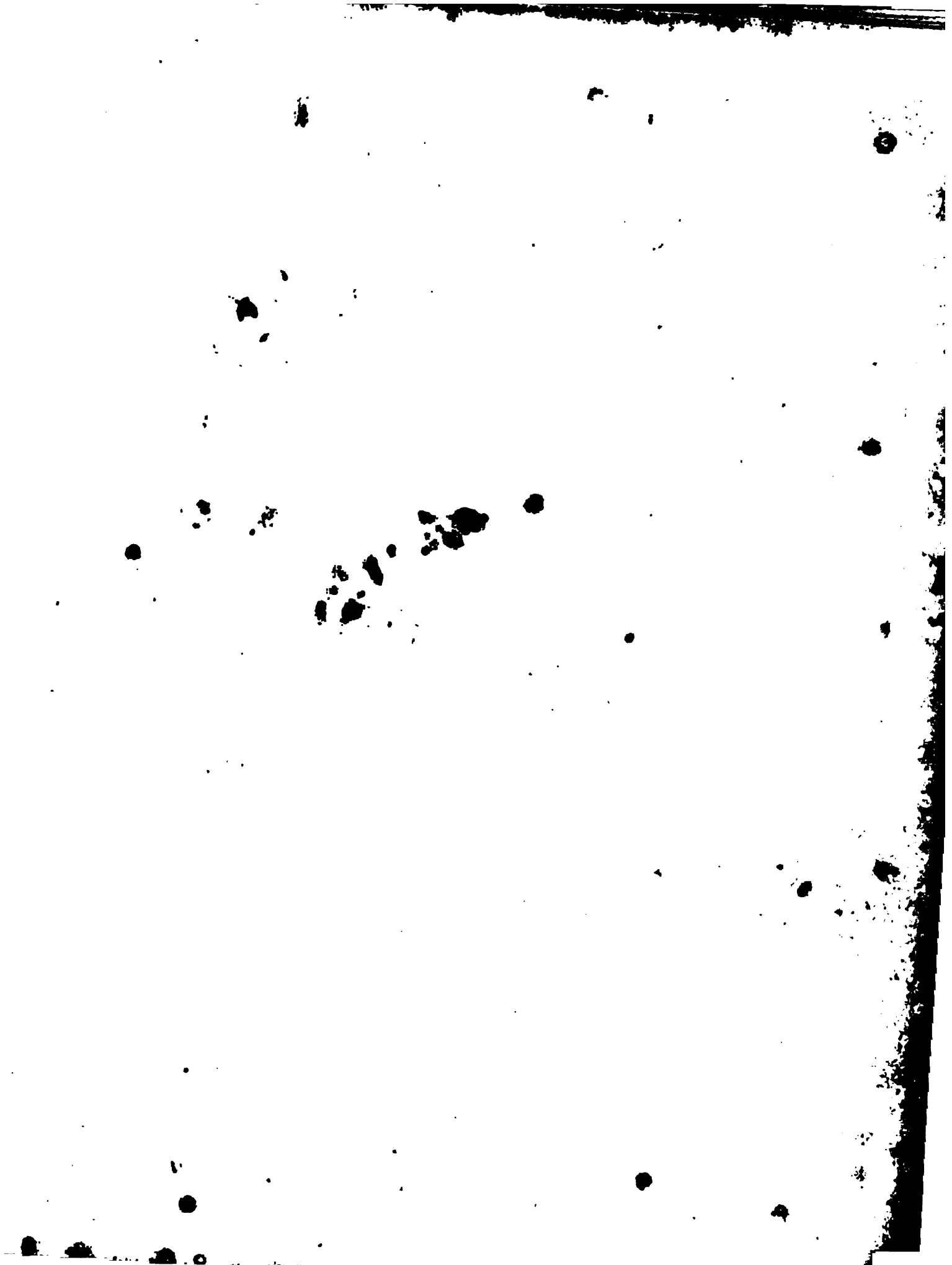










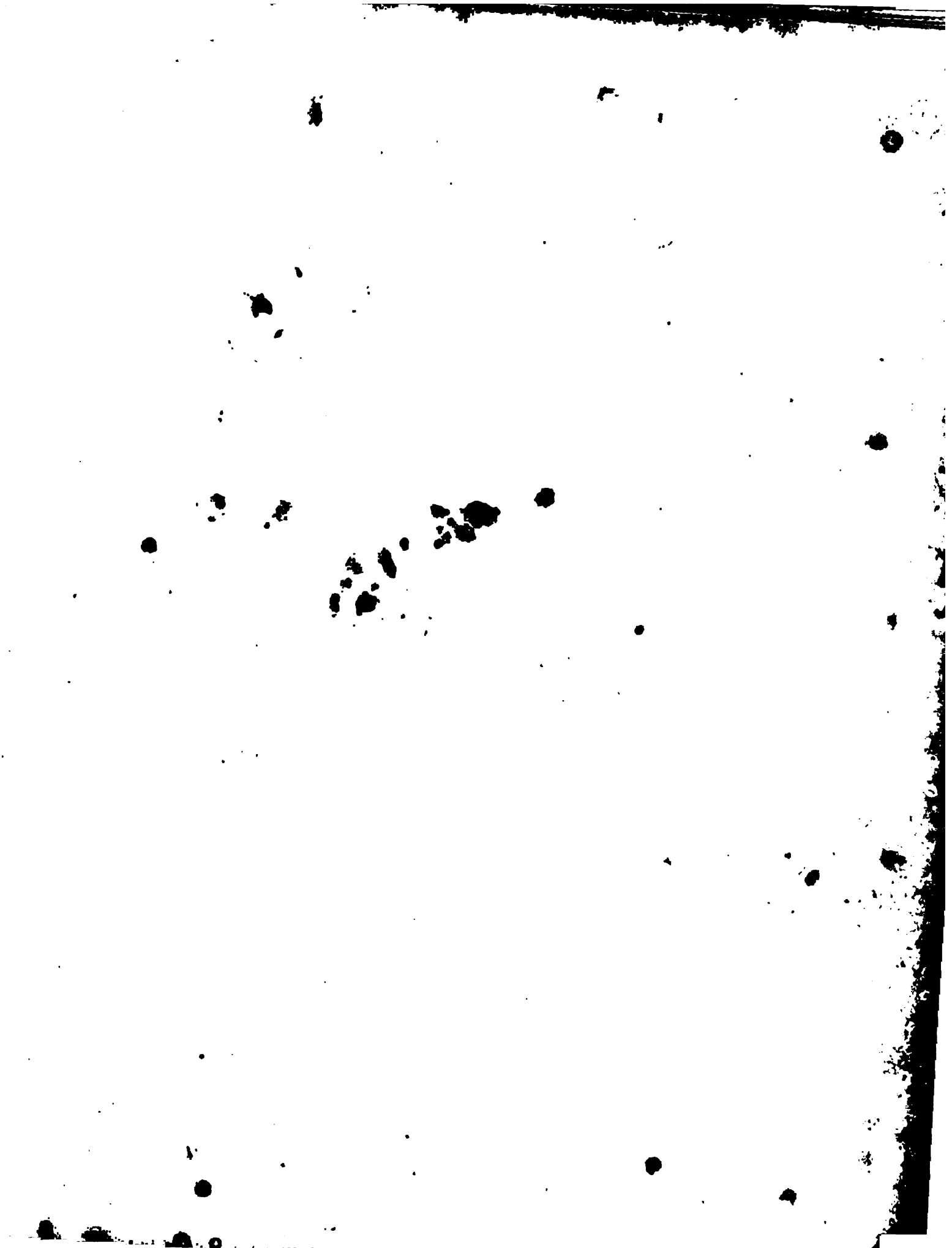
























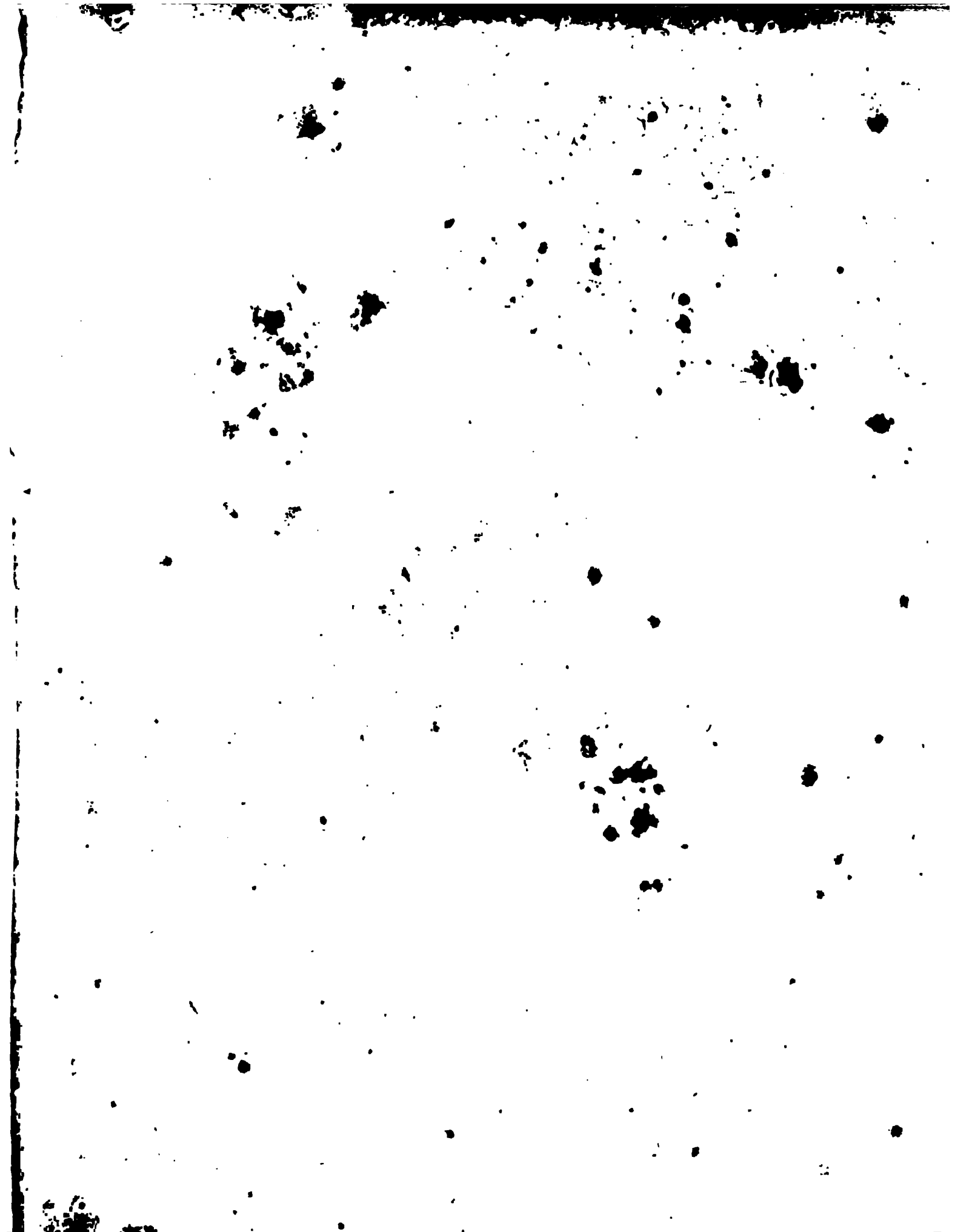








Olden's edition







# V A T E S;

OR THE

## PHILOSOPHY OF MADNESS.

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### CHAPTER I.

IN the days of my earlier youth, I knew a Monk who bore the name of Pulci. We had been separated for half a century of years, when we met again, strange to relate, at a masquerade given by a foreign lady, at her villa near Firenze. I surveyed my friend as a time-hallowed remnant of past affection, but questioned whether to revive an old attachment, or let it rest for ever in the grave of passion. On discovering me, however, he advanced so cordially, that I yielded up the emotions of former days, and enjoyed the grasp of his hand.

Returning home together after the entertainment, we had already reached the Via Larga, discoursing of Alfieri, the mystic Dante, and others of the ancient dead. The events of the night had been sufficient to dispose our souls to solemnity. When the company had assembled, and festivities were commencing, there entered an aged man—a stranger—and yet scarce a stranger, for in former days he had been known to many present, who had pardoned his iniquities in the fond belief that he was no more. The reappearance of his living figure cast a sudden gloom over the mockeries of that festive night. He was remembered with horror, though not unmingled with the veneration which is due to overwhelming age. He was heard to converse with many of his old acquaintance, nor did he forbear, with a hardihood that ill became his years, to hint darkly at the enormities he had committed, not as a savage and hungry bandit for his bread, but as a wily philosopher, who practised on the thoughts, passions, and lives of his fellow-creatures, that he might himself live, feel, and think in greater darkness, and that, as a writer, he might acquire a larger portion of tragic power than his predecessors. And when he perceived that he was regarded by others as a dreadful genius newly ascended from the tomb, he involuntarily shuddered, and enjoyed the secret satisfaction of beholding that he had suspended the pleasures, and cast a fearful cloud over the gaieties of the night.

I was that aged man!

At the loud sound of midnight, I started from a profound reverie, and precipitately left the villa, accompanied, as I have just said, by my ancient friend. It was a cloudy moonlight, but starless night:—so much for the heavens. The earth was cold, the mountains, plain, and waters alternately bright and shaded. We proceeded to the city by the side of the murmuring Mugnone, conversing, as I have said, of men; and we entered the Via Larga at the Porta San Gallo.

"And where have your days been passed since we last entered this city together?"

"In other lands, O Pulci! amid cruelty, darkness, and despair."

"Alas! before you left us the first time," rejoined my companion, "you had exhausted the noblest forces of your genius, in too faithfully depicting the troubles of your home."

"It is sadly true," was my reply; and at the recollection a pang of agony smote my brow.

"Formerly," said Pulci, "you were wont to repose confidence in me; I was your father confessor; and although your secrets were too startling ever to have been forgotten, they have not been divulged unto this hour."

"The awe-striking titles of works which I once displayed to you, have from that time remained unseen; when I am dead, they shall be revealed again!"

"During your long sojourn abroad," resumed Pulci, "we thought you breathed no more. If your latter works, like the former, are gathered from the sufferings of the living heart, you must have borne witness to many a new sorrow, since we met in other days. Why have you not added to those tragedies the memoirs of your life? they would form the strangest history of all."

A long pause ensued. His remark conjured up recollections which for years had been scarcely awakened—the remembrances of crimes which no other law than that of conscience could chastise; and I felt my spirit sink into an abyss within me, as I exclaimed—"Would that I had been never born!"

I was abstracted in deep mental silence for another lengthened period, which was at length disturbed by a vague impression that Pulci had endeavoured to pour sounds of consolation into my ear. "Indeed," resumed I, "I have passed through scenes the most awful. These grey hairs, this sere and wrinkled visage, are all that is now left of the once high-minded tragedian. In youth I seared my conscience with red-hot fire, and squandered away the virtues which nature had allotted to me. They were a noble fortune, and might have lasted me my days; or, increasing in number, have formed a chain from earth to heaven. The virtuous cannot long be unhappy! But, like an alchemist, submitting myself to the mercy of experiment, in the hope of countless gain, I so tortured and scorched my passions as to reduce myself to the dreadful remnant of dust and ashes which you behold."

"Although oftentimes shocked at your deeds, and yet more at the principles which guided you, I have ever sympathized with your genius. Far be it from my desire that you should inflict on yourself a new species of pain; yet I cannot help thinking that by a free and conscientious rehearsal of the events of your intellectual life, you might prepare yourself for the composition of a written history. Moreover, the mere act of unloading your mind of its terrors, would restore elasticity to the good which remains within it. Confess to me, as a father of the holy church—confess to me, I beseech you, the dreadful truths; for if I judge aright of what has passed, you have continued to pursue the bent of your genius with a stern, savage, and unsubdued delight."

The words of the holy man had awakened in my breast a series of old emotions, of which I had often repented, only to glory again in the recollection. In my wars with the human race, man had been the first aggressor; it was not, therefore, in my place to concede, neither had my foes the power to enforce concession; for while my life was secure, and my will unsubdued, was I not equal to legions of my enemies? Such is the grandeur of spiritual warfare, that a mind

greater than each of its rivals, is greater than all! Mind gains little by uniting its numbers against one superior in strength to each. Behold me, therefore, O Pulci! not only on the defensive, but in moments of peace, when all save I alone were tired, the offender. For, not content, as others are, to hate only, or by bloodshed to destroy the objects of my antipathy, (which is little more than permitting the flood of venom to drip away into a simple curse or sneer,) I employed only intellectual instruments of revenge. I watched my opportunity of wrestling with souls, of converting selfishness and pride into abject humiliation! and then, glutted with ecstasy, I stabbed the hearts that I had broken.

By this time we had crossed the Piazza del Duomo, under the shadow of that Campanile whose beauty seemed to smile at the undecorated heavens! and we reached the palace where I lived.

"Many years have elapsed, O Pulci! since you were last within these walls. This room, as indicated by the works and paintings it contains, is the Grecian Chamber. What think you of that bust of Æschylus? It was designed and sculptured by my own hand: antiquity, as you know, has handed us down no original model. Look above at that painting of the rock-chained Prometheus: has the artist conveyed to you an idea of tortures in the midst of the vast and raging deep? The work is worthy of our Salvator. The sculpture a little beyond is the rapt Cassandra! she has not yet given utterance to the mighty woe! Above it, regard the Supplicants, in attitudes of piety, asking safety of their relation, Jove! Hear you not their lovely prayer? The next is Electra, unwilling to resign the Urn. The painting above her is a smiling figure, about to lift the veil from Clytemnestra's corpse. The remaining subjects belong to the third tragedian of Greece, and those few volumes placed beneath the busts of The Classic Trinity, are all, alas! that remain of many more.

"Through this chamber we pass into another, devoted to modern tragedy."

Having thus rapidly addressed my friend, I led him into my study. It was the studio of an old man. No modern work of art, science, or letters was there to contrast with the rare antiquities of my collection. I loved ancient things, for they not only removed my vision, but my entire being, from the present. The past is the only foreign station in time that delights without excitement, its objects are so tranquil! Things which were once plebeian have acquired a look of nobility from having so long been still!

In the drama of the ancients, the characters are all life and motion as we peruse; but when we cease, the scenes seem to be suddenly arrested, the actors to drop into exquisite groups, and to petrify into breathing marble. Not so in the modern stage, where action persists in the memory, and proceeds as often as the scenes are remembered.

We were seated.

As it is your desire, then, O Pulci! I will disclose those secrets which I thought would perish in the spiritual prison-house in which they have so long been confined. The attempt to wrest my history from me, has been often unsuccessfully made, but to-night my soul has been disposed to revelation, and made to feel that it may be well for mankind to learn the eventful means whereby one among them has ascended to the highest pinnacle of tragic glory.

The first tears that I remember to have shed were at the time of my mother's death. Not in commemoration of that event did they flow; but the gloom of her recent absence from our living circle had driven me, with my book, to the Arno's lonely and quiet bank, where I read of the



Persian bard, the Anacreon of the East, whose works were chained to his tomb, that the intellectual pilgrim, who rested at his shrine, might be refreshed; and I burst into tears of sympathy over the page. The idea of how few of all who died became immortal, forcibly struck me; and looking on myself, although but a youth, I felt that even I was in danger of voiceless and ignominious decay!

"Ye Indian princes!" exclaimed I, "how awful are your mausoleums, and how noble is that pride which requires the palace of the dead to be no less superb than that of the living ruler!" As I thus said, a temple seemed to rise before me on the banks of the water where I reposed; within its centre was a tomb. Gradually my reverie seemed to yield to a state approaching so near to insensibility, as to be only conscious of itself. I seemed in the tomb. On the marble walls and columns around me were engraven thousands of the mighty thoughts which I had left behind; and emissaries from all nations came thither to collect them as the oracles of nature. The deluded poor rushed in crowds to read of the empire they had lost, because they had no ambition; the great came to be converted to humanity by my sad appeals. It was a splendid vision to be interred in that asylum of thought, and to be visited in death as one who had seen the threatenings of the future, and, by thinking, had saved mankind!

Without being aware of the transition, I found myself seated, as before, and enjoying a new species of consciousness. I was in utter night. Stars were darting through the void, and without illuming the darkness, sank into the invisible deep. Lightnings traversed the gloom, passing slowly from one horizon to another, as if pensively conscious while they pursued their way. From the upper region majestically descended an enormous globe: as the fires of heaven passed through, it seemed to be made up of the fragments of one yet greater, and to be inhabited by savage forms of gigantic stature, who hurled its portions from place to place, and set free the sluices of its waters.

The day appeared, the globe was seen to be a world. Its bare mountains were covered with reptiles, which devoured the scanty stalks of vegetation, and drank the torrents which rushed down. The valleys were greener; they were devoured by other creatures; and all things enjoyed their monstrous being. Many were the scenes; change succeeded change, till man at last appeared. By that time the soil was rich in fruits and flowers, in corn, and herds of cattle.

There was majesty and beauty in the face of man; but whether it was that he was born unprovided for, and in want, or, from the original structure of his soul;—there was discontent in his countenance at the moment of his birth.

The race of man increased, and was governed by Tyranny, the Tutor of Superstition. In the distance, appeared Philosophy. I saw her light, and the joy I felt aroused me from my waking-dream.

The vision which had appeared to me, I believed to be nothing less than the revelation of my future career, and I seriously gave my mind to its precise interpretation. In the temple I saw realized the glory which was to close on my life; in the scene which followed I saw the first subject of my pen. My subject was the Creation! a theme selected by every poet in his youth, and one in which all are sure to fail. That day formed an epoch in my life. Henceforth I grew more reserved and pensive; my figure altered from youth to precocious manhood; my brow expanded, and I became the rapt enthusiast. For many months I held little intercourse

with my companions, and even towards my father conducted myself with impatience and pride. In the solitude of my chamber I passed the day in study, and the night in reflection. My soul had begun to breathe in the ardent glory of innocent genius which, like a young mariner cast on a foreign shore, knew not what language to speak. Metrical thought cannot adopt any previous combination of sounds, but has to learn a language of its own inventing. Either heedless, or not aware of this, I boldly dashed into the arena of the ideal, and committed to parchment thoughts and expressions which I conceived to exceed in grandeur the vision which had been my teacher, and which distinctly reappeared to my excited fancy whenever I hailed the muse. The sentiments and learning which my book contained, I regarded with a degree of pride and vain-glory, which now I look back to with a smile; and remembering with bitterness that the vulgar press must be my only medium of communication with the world, I reverted to my first vision, complained of the tardy hand of Providence, and in despair anticipated my father's death, that the inheritance might be expended in raising my ideal temple on the solitary Arno.

There is a reality in the speculations of our youth, which brings with it more enjoyment than is afterwards found in the tranquil possession. The pleasing labour of conceiving dreams is ever rewarded with success; the hope enjoys mental existence, no grief follows when it disappears, for it may easily be conjured up again. Omnipotence Ideal! Thou remindest us of what our future state may be—to live in an ecstasy of intangible visions in the midst of spiritual possessions.

But the time at length arrives when the summoned Hope refuses to obey the call. Touch her smile-diffusing soul with one bitter disappointment, her delicate frame withers; she pines, and comes not again. Summons her, and her sister answers the call, her second sister, Despair!

The work which I had resolved should one day figure on the marble page of the temple, though defective in execution, was not devoid of beauty. But by the young the expression is never made to represent the feeling; and those who have had their taste formed to models of excellence, detest the inaccuracies of rapid, though inspired, composition. Simplicity, so beautiful in itself; so easy that the mere eye can fathom it, is ever more regarded than the thought it expresses, for the latter is indebted to it for its beauty. But when thought predominates over language, we no longer read, but reason.

It was my fault, at first, to draw rather on the intellect than on the polished taste of the reader. Experience, however, had not then taught me the distinction; and, as I myself thoroughly understood all that I had written, and found it good, I thought I already saw immortal glory descending on me from heaven.

My mind, however, had yet to receive its first lesson of the world. A leader of the literati, the enemy of our house, was the first to hold me up to public contempt; others followed his example, and I was mocked and satirized by those who had not read me. My own class, adhering to their prejudices, thought the display of talent better suited to the priest than the noble, and looked on my performance with coldness. Many of them, however, especially the women, could neither read nor write their native tongue.

The quality of Italian pride is too exquisite for man, and the real noble of our clime is the most lofty of the world's aristocracy. He does not even seem to know that there is such an allotment as trouble. He has no ambition beyond his own state—the brilliant circle—the fair smile, but seems to feel his greatness perfect. No climate is suited to him but the sweetest on earth—

his own! Although he never thinks at all, he always acts with dignity. He does not read, but his ideas are beautiful, and replete with measured grace. Yet he is unconscious of his superiority, it is so natural to him; and he never compares others with himself. Then how could an order of such ancient graces be aware that genius, the gift of nature, could adorn its artificial circle?

I needed not the pecuniary friendship of the public; but how many are there, O ye officers of literary justice! who have no other fortune than the mind! Then crush not with the weight of your own wisdom the first productions of youth. The aspirations thus cruelly levelled fail not to rise again; they even take a stronger flight; but the spirit is changed, it is unamiable, gloomy, and almost misanthropic; it hates in the voice of affection! The writer is punished for no crime; and is there no retribution? Listen! The public—that innocent babe of the literary fathers—the public is the sufferer for its guardian's crimes; for its mind, no less weak than extensive, may be led astray by every doctrine that is pleasing, so that the solemnized hatred of the injured has only to invest its sentiments in music to give vice the aspect of divine.

Whether by further development of genius, or by its transmutation, I know not; but the result of this unjust criticism was to teach me that I could be a bad man. I rejoice at having made the confession, for I fear hereafter that I shall excuse my misdeeds, and attribute all to inevitable doom.

How difficult it is to be a great critic! As long as the world lasts, different tastes must pervade it; so long as men are differently born, taught, and placed,—feeling, thought, and opinion must vary. Meditate on the word *Prosperity*! it is prose to the rich man, poetry to the poor!

To the early chastisement I received at the hands of the elders, I trace back the bitterness of a prolonged existence; and whether, in analysing my life, I count over the years, days, or hours, I find they have all been equally bitter. And let this be received as no unimportant revelation from one who, having begun his career in enthusiastic virtue, became a brigand, who discovered his best delight to be in robbing the happy of their peace.

The flood of morals takes a direct course through the valley of Time, whence it empties itself into the depths of futurity. It retains the same hues and features throughout its progress, save that it may be here widened with the distance from its source, and there varied by the events of its progress; but there are many tributary streams of different kinds, which modify its character as they rush down upon it from the dark mountains of the past.

It was not because of loving, courting, and offering my hand in vain to Fame, that my hatred was ripened: I had other passions, whose end was equally fatal. These, uniting their discontent with the first into one great sorrow, had a proportionate influence in darkening my way, and consigning my existence to destruction.

All these tributary miseries I need not rehearse, as many were of a nature not to have permanently affected the general mind. It was the depth of my feelings, and the absence of familiar sympathy, that rendered me the early victim of great emotion. If I might compare the common mind to a lyre whose strings, even when harshly touched, are soon restored to tranquillity, the jarring discord quickly subsiding, I would say that mine was like a vast organ, which, touched by impious hands, resounded thunder. Indeed, the most simple words, uttered in a slow and affecting tone, would always awake within me a more dreadful meaning than they really conveyed, and strike me with tragic awe.

There was a young lady, a native of our city, (I shudder to repeat her name !) who was called Maria Ferrini. Ere yet I knew her distinctly by sight, or had heard her voice, I loved her. We never passed each other without my feeling that we should influence each other's doom. I never saw her even at a distance, never heard her name mentioned, without undergoing a change of feeling. A friend whom I looked up to and esteemed, who had known her from her infancy, and loved her as a father loves his child, had often conversed of her in my presence, calling her always the sweet Maria Ferrini. So often had my imagination been struck by that endearing epithet, that I loved her for her sweetness' sake.

One evening I met her by chance at a party, but, strange to say, I did not feel the least desire to obtain an introduction. Either the ideal vanished when the real was within my reach, or I was afraid of discovering in her some defect which might destroy my faith in her perfection, and dispel the charm. But the moment she was gone I mourned the loss, lamented my indifference, and imagined, even, that she might have regarded me as a literary pretender, whose attempts at distinction had signally failed. I retired in low spirits, and was wretched during the following day.

A month elapsed, when we met again at the same house as before. Lest my determination should alter by delay, I lost not a moment in being introduced. During the short ceremony, I was speechless, trembling, and pale. Maria left me before we had exchanged a word, to perform on the harp. She was the delight of all present. And oh ! how sweet was that voice in song ! Never since have I heard such harmony and such expression. The tone of that voice was different to every other.

After a time, I found myself tranquilly seated by her side ; and we discoursed of the national music. Wherever she moved I followed. In the refreshment room, it was I who attended her ; in the crowd of suitors, it was I who most listened, and replied, to her fair ideas ; or expressed, by deep silence, my devotion to their beauty.

When she retired, after gracefully bowing to the company, which was not numerous, she took a marked leave of me. I was the last to receive her parting smile !

The sweet Maria Ferrini caused me a night of restless slumbers.

But when I arose on the morrow, it was a melancholy reflection that, after an evening of such joyous intimacy, there was no definite prospect of our meeting again. I went forth and sought the shades of Boboli, reading aloud while ascending and descending the broad walk of the gardens. Boethius had become my favourite study ; and his consolations affected my nature—the more now that it was softened by a tender passion. But ever and anon, my eyes wandered from the pages of the philosopher to the bowers where Maria had told me she was accustomed to take her early walk in the air. My hopes were ungratified, and I returned disconsolate home.

On entering the saloon I encountered my father, who presented me with the card of the Marchese Ferrini. "Cultivate no acquaintance with that family !" said he. I demanded why, but could elicit no explanation. This peremptory order of my father cast into painful reflection the excessive joy I experienced on finding, by this visit, my way prepared to the presence of Maria. I had conversed with the marquis, the brother of my adored, on the previous night ; and although this man was deformed and disfigured by hereditary disease, I assiduously cultivated his acquaintance. Had not Maria suggested his present visit ? While yet revolving this question

in my mind, I received an invitation from the Marquis Ferrini to pass the evening at his mother's house. What joy I felt! I rushed from the house to the Villa Ferrini to acknowledge in person the invitation, and accept it in my Maria's presence. What ecstasy! The indefinite hope was made finite; the objects of eternity were brought within the compass of a day. I rushed out of the palace in defiance of my father, drove to the suburb, and stood at the gate of the Villa Ferrini. I was about to ring the bell, when all confidence failed me; my heart beat with such violence that I paused as if I had been struck. I raised my hand again to ring, but while still hesitating through some strange fear, the porter stood before me, the door having opened. I started back as if I had encountered my father, and for a moment I could not speak. Unasked, the domestic informed me that the family was out. The intelligence soothed me; I now felt as if I could encounter Maria herself! I left an embossed card, coroneted, and engraved with my name; and I thought that the "palle" of the Medici on the shield which stamped my billet, must awaken honourable reflections in my favour. So it always is with merit; it forgets its natural recommendations, and leans for support on things which rather address themselves to the prejudices than the senses of mankind.

I returned home on foot with my eyes on the earth; this mere failure in the object of my visit, which was to look on Maria, struck me with despair. Love is an infidel—it reposes no trust in Providence. "Maria!" I exclaimed aloud; and looking up, she and her brother stood before me! She had heard me! I blushed, I bit my lip with rage and mortification; said a few unconnected words, and hurried on.

She must have heard my ejaculation, but neither she nor her brother betrayed the least confusion. To have done so would have been ill-bred, for well as they might suspect, they could by no means be certain whom I meant. Maria's manner, however, I suspiciously attributed to absence of sympathy with my passion, and a heartless desire to make her indifference felt. My resentment knew no bounds to think that she should have intruded, however inadvertently, on my private thoughts; for the triumph which she must have felt, seemed to merit as much displeasure as if the means by which she attained it had been less innocent.

As to her brother, he seemed so beneath my contempt, that I railed at his bodily infirmities.

I may here make an observation, which, as this is a history of my mind, is not inappropriate. At this time I was forcibly struck with the fact of my private sentiments having been thus unexpectedly overheard, and the adventure was not without its use. In after life, when the eyes of mankind were upon me, I accustomed myself to utter such sentiments in private as I wished the world to give me credit for; and only to think in silence of motives which I desired to conceal. By this means, more than once my soliloquies have carried conviction to those who have designedly overheard them, while my assertions would have failed, and my conscience, by outward expression, have blasted their verisimilitude.

When the evening arrived, I proceeded to the Villa Ferrini with far other views than I had entertained a few hours before, resolving to repel pride with pride. But as I entered the saloon, my eyes met the welcoming smile of Maria! I was instantly disarmed, my illusions fled, and I bent to her in the humility of adoration.

Many persons were assembled when I arrived. I took my station apart from the crowd, and while others were brilliant in conversation, and glad at the trifles of each other, I shone

alone in the silent distance, and felt distinct from all. Wrapped in myself, I vowed to address none that night but Maria. She had smiled beneficently on me; she had betrayed symptoms of affection: let her not torment me again!

My mind was unable to adapt itself to the usages of my fellow-creatures, and unwilling to understand their enjoyments. I almost thought that they entertained towards me sentiments of defiance when they laughed and talked in my presence, which certainly gave them no encouragement to be glad. Yet I received some satisfaction in believing that during the intervals of their merriment their thoughts must revert to me, and in spite of themselves be occupied in secretly contemplating the work of my inward existence.

The concert had commenced, when Maria came and sat by my side. The effect of the music on me was dramatic. It inspired me with confidence to speak, and my thoughts, as they flowed, found themselves expressed in eloquent language. This gave me the assurance that Maria could not deem me defective in intelligence, (a judgment of which I stood in constant fear,) and the tone of conversation rose higher and higher every moment. My features glowed as with newly-discovered power while the conversation was sustained; but when the music ceased, I was chilled into death-like silence, and experienced the consciousness in which poetry might invest the like attitude of a statue. I was conscious of my marble aspect, and with an artifice which was ever ready, I tried to sustain it for effect, and failing, laughed at my folly.

During the hours that I was in Maria's presence, my volition fled, my impulses were derived from her alone. When she addressed me, I felt as if my flesh were dissolving. Like a prophet under divine visitation, I was unable to bear the glory of her questions, and often I made her no reply.

She was called upon to sing. How little did I enjoy her voice while others heard as well, compared to the pleasure I had drunk from its liquid tones in retired conversation.

A love of sacred music had descended to her from her accomplished mother. A rich-toned organ stood in the drawing-room of the villa, and at the close of the entertainment she played and sang as taught by the written genius of Mozart. The full sounds of solemn song were poured in a cataract of rapture on my heart; and overwhelmed with emotion, my reason slept, my soul sank into a dream. My eyes closed; I seemed seated in the aisle of a cathedral overcome with religious fear. The anthem flowed into the remote chancel; its prayer kissed the vaulted roof.

Led on by the continuous music from thought to thought, I suddenly seemed to undergo a transfiguration. Dressed in bright garments, which glowed with inherent light, I led the pale Maria by her right hand to the altar. There was a voice above us which spoke of union and love; the holy water was sprinkled—the lovely virgin was now mine. There was a blissful pause. Time advanced not, and two mortals conveyed into each other's eyes a glow of immortal joy.

The music ended, and the reverie fled. Maria walked towards me from the organ; had her thoughts accompanied mine? No! mortals are too poor in gifts to thus mingle in each other's exaltation; and while two lovers are near each other, the one may be traversing the regions of divine passion, while the other meditates the garments which she wears. The music had ceased, and the dead effect which followed chilled the heat of my fancy, as the snowy Alps at twilight triumph over the setting sun as he sinks behind them from his past meridian glory.

The evening had afforded me much delight, for my attentions to the Ferrini had been received

with looks too mild and seducing to be mistaken. My heart was so enlarged by her kindness, that, though I chid the tear of gratitude, I felt benevolence towards all mankind.

After that evening I frequently saw Maria, but the feeling of fear never ceased to depress me in her presence, as if her beauty were terrible to look on. Though I never refused the invitations of her family, I now preferred being alone; thinking of her was more delicious to me than being in her presence. Every day I fell into that depressed state of mind whose calm is only interrupted by sobs, the feelings being too sad, and their nature too undefined, for tears; a pensive grief too pure to be expressed by material emblems of sorrow. So entirely was my soul converted into love—so pure, exquisite, and spiritual was the great emotion, that my mental state might have been selected for immortality as a model of the perfection to which the divine passion can attain. As if in prayer to the Holy Virgin, I thought not of, but towards my Maria, as if to affect her, a heavenly being, with remote sympathy, and lead her thoughts towards me through the distance of our homes.

My father, whom I loved less than my departed mother, was at this period ill. His malady, insanity, had increased on him terribly of late, and in a lucid interval he sent for me to his chamber. He had withheld his affection from me to bestow it on a lovely daughter, and I believe he inwardly groaned that not a landmark of his vast estates could be moved in my sister's favour. With an ill grace he was forced, on his death-bed, to sue to me for his daughter's portion, which, for her sake, I willingly gave up, though I made him feel that it was a favour. He had treated me from boyhood until then with severity, and the harshness of his soul was the last passion that survived the wreck of his body. His agonized eye fixed its death-stricken glare on me, as his tongue, ever and anon interrupted by the rattle of the victor which was sprung to hurry him from the scene, pronounced words of hatred. In his last mad sentence he named me the heir of his estates, his title, and his curse; and I smiled him out of the world. All his gifts, alas! have I enjoyed to the present hour.

Oh! Pulci! envy not my inheritance.

There is my father's portrait, and, as you perceive, its frame is enveloped in mourning; and in mourning shall it be till I am no more. You ask me why I should torment myself with his presence, and why insult the dead? Alas! the wretched, the eternally lost, who, like myself, are shut out from hope, have no other resource than a change of feeling; and precious are the objects which attract the soul from one subject of regret to another!

I saw that my auditor was astonished at my discourse, and a deep glow of pleasure at the discovery ran through my still susceptible frame, and I gnashed my teeth to subdue that satiric laugh which announces the misanthrope's triumph.

Maria's brother, during the summer months, was in the habit of residing on his estate, near Sienna, and I dreaded to think that the day of his departure was drawing nigh; for I made my acquaintance with him the pretext for my frequent visits at the Villa Ferrini, not having yet been introduced to his mother. He was amiable, generous, and affectionate; but loved his own prosperity the more in proportion as he should have loved himself the less, on account of his deformity. We had appointed a farewell meeting to take place at his house, on the day before he quitted Florence. I was already there, when a servant entered the anti-room to request that I would visit the signora. I was charmed to obey the summons; for without being known to her, I could not venture to repeat my visits to Maria.

I found the signora reclining at full length on a sofa. Her face brightened into a smile as I approached her. Though superior to her in birth, a Medici, I scarcely felt myself on an equality with one whose consent was necessary to my being happy. I bowed rather with the awkward humility of genius than the instinctive pride of rank. But, with a renewed smile, she threw out her beautiful hand, and so fascinated me, that the scene is still vivid in my memory. How tractable must I have been when that act of kindness alone won my confiding heart! In manner, feature, and voice, she was the prototype of her daughter, and almost looked as youthful! This was fortunate; for we instinctively feel horror at the sight of a resemblance between the faded mother and her lovely daughter. It demonstrates, with a certainty too convincing, what must one day be the fate of the younger; and that fate is pictured, it lives, it looks at you, in the exact form in which it will hereafter be locked in your embrace. Without my love being diminished for the child, I easily formed a duplicate of my affection, and loved the parent; she was just at that elder-sister age, which is so interesting in the mother of a lovely family.

On quitting the house, I was honoured by the same kind shake of the hand, the same smile; I thought of my father's cruelty, and left the room in tears! Maria watched my departure, and her brother accompanied me to the gates of the villa, earnestly entreating me to visit him at his villa near Sienna.

My father's carriage bore me to the home which still held a sister. I wept bitterly at having insulted, even in thought, my friend Ferrini; and now that I felt myself regarded with affection by so amiable a family, I took a secret delight in visiting the chamber of the remorseless dead. My only enemy lay there! I approached the bier, regarded the decently composed form and tranquil features; I tried to read in them the lines which declared him my relation, and to penetrate the source of my being. But death seemed to cast from its silence a deeper mystery over the question of our mortal origin than life itself; and as I stood over it in motionless curiosity, my thoughts gradually changed into a sentiment of terror.

"Would that the Ferrini were here," I shouted; "it is for her to participate in all my emotions. Let her enter this chamber of death, partake its chill, and then let her embrace me! Two souls frozen in horror, not feeling yet knowing that they loved!"

"And thou, my mother! whom I loved, but for whose departure I could never shed a tear, where is thy corpse? Should it not be locked in the embrace of this? If, smitten as I am with a madman's curse, I commit suicide in the bedchamber of the dead, would ye be doomed to beget me again? Or, rather, as your lives consented to my birth, must not your corpses consent to my destruction? Awake, my father! curse thy son again!"

Raising my eyes slowly from the bier to heaven, I muttered a formal prayer for the safety of departed souls. There was a tall figure in white at the other end of the chamber. The scattered rays of light brought the flowing robe to my vision, but I dared not look down; superstitious awe overcame me; I shuddered, and demanded who was there? I looked, and beheld my sister!

"Hither!" I exclaimed, in a voice of terror; and I conducted her in tears to the spot where her father lay.



## CHAPTER II.

THOUGH a haughty restraint eternally curbed my emotions, the body, unprotected by the will, submitted to the dilapidating influence of the mind ; and its ravages were declared to the eyes of all who viewed me. The Ferrini family were struck with the alteration which sorrow had wrought in my aspect, and showed their anxiety on every occasion. Maria had exchanged her sweet smile for sadness ; and the signora regarding us both with pity, anxiously provided us with every means of diversion. From morning to night I passed my time at the villa, with the exception of an hour daily spent at a convent with my young and only sister.

Probably the Marquis Ferrini had heard, through his relatives, how much I had taken my father's death to heart, and how I pined in secret at the event ; for a letter, dictated in terms of the warmest sympathy and affection, arrived, pressing me in every line to accompany his mother and sister to his country house.

Alas ! it was not my father's death which destroyed my peace, but his malediction.

I respectfully attended the funeral. The service was performed in the Capella de' Medici, and the body placed there among my ancestors, in virtue of a privilege inherent in the family, though its direct line is absorbed in a new dynasty, the present governing power.

How good is the air of the country for that mourner whose sorrows commenced in a city ! See me now, with my friends, enjoying the brimming atmosphere, and a mighty sky extended over woods, plains, mountains, cataracts, precipices, ravines, and rivers ! Maria and I enjoyed a virgin honeymoon of anticipation ! One common impulse prescribed our thoughts ; wherever the one roamed, the other quickly followed. Every spot in the grounds became hallowed by affection ; the shrubberies, lawns, grottoes, cascades, and lakes, were witnesses of a tender passion ; our long ramblings awoke the stillness of nature into expression, and destroyed the most ancient solitudes.

In early youth the amiable express but little of what they feel, however much they may be absorbed in passion. I should have thought it sacrilege to have tainted Maria's pure mind with a confession of my love ; and cruelty to have disturbed the innocent gladness of her face with the blush of shame. We were content with the tacit adoration of each other ! We felt alike ; we reposed unbounded confidence in each other, nor deemed it necessary to start the imaginary doubt at a moment when our hearts were in unison so blissful.

With another, this daylight dream of love, this practical reverie of bliss, would have ended as the natural and just desires of man are doomed to end ; with me the result was fatal !

I had a meek sister in a convent at Florence, who demanded a brother's care, and my affairs required my presence at home. These causes led me to quit the country for a short time ; and I promised to return soon to my friends.

My estates were in the Volterrana; and in that district I had a fine old castle, where I had spent many a glad day with my sister, and our old playfellow, Orazio Aldobrandini. I met the latter at Florence, on my return, and exacted from him a promise to accompany me and my sister to the haunts of our past childhood. My friend Kunikos was of the party. I invited him out of a strange, nay, wicked thought of mischief. He hated women, and I wished to see the effect his presence would have on myself, a man in love, and on the lovers—Orazio and my sister. We started after a few days' delay, during which time I settled on my sister exactly double the portion which my father had desired. Considering that two hearts out of the four had been so recently desolated, we formed a comparatively cheerful party. Finding myself so happy in this company, and seeing all the world, with its riches and honours at my command, I questioned whether I was not devoting too much of my time to the Ferrini, but it was only a passing thought, suggested rather by my evil genius than my own feelings, and one which rather excited alarm than met with assent in my breast.

We were far advanced on our journey, and the evening was approaching as we entered a valley covered with vines and fig-trees. The scenery around was beginning to assume its olden characters, and to forcibly wake within me the memory of early times. We crossed and recrossed the rugged torrent, our horses tripping against the ruins of the olived heights; then entered another wide and sandy waste. Descending a declivity, we reached a brook overhung with the pale Sally and wild Vine on one side, and on the other by the Alder and dark-leaved Ilex. Now and then, at the summit of a hill, a farm-house would appear, surrounded by stacks; and more than once, before which I reverentially bent, a little square chapel, with its Madonna and Child, of rudest art, and decorated with branches of withered olive, offered itself to the adorations of the wayfaring travellers.

At length the sun was setting behind the distant Appennines, and ever and anon as the path turned, we had glimpses of Volterra, with its towers bright and yellow in the evening beams. The night soon followed, for the twilight of Italy passes yet more rapidly away than the pleasing dreams of youth.

I paused for a moment, as it were to salute the country which I loved, and to be welcomed as its new possessor. Behind us lay the dusky waste we had traversed, darkened yet more here and there with a dwarfish tree, and terminating in the dimness of even. On one side moved the stony and briar-entangled course of the Cecina, as its waters meandered into the far wilderness over its rocky and alabaster bed; on the other, the Strada Reale stretched out, and beyond it a line of low hills which mingled with the horizon. And right ahead were seen the black heights, illumed at intervals with a pale expanse of lightning which showed the low underwood with which they were covered, or led into momentary vision the rolling volumes of vapour which arose from the hidden ravine. I felt as all feel in early youth, while the mind is still coloured by romance, and dismounting from my horse, I prostrated myself on the earth to kiss my inheritance, the scene of my childhood, and my native soil.

We were at the gates of our home; with elated hearts we scampered up the long avenue to the castle, and in half-an-hour its dark turrets were within view.

So enchanted was I with the pleasures of early recollection, that I lingered day after day among its scenes, ever making resolves to return to Sienna, and ever postponing. One strong inducement I had above all others for remaining, which was, not to forcibly interrupt the pro-

gress of an attachment which was striking its tender roots into the breasts of my sister and her companion.

They were ever together, as I and Maria had been. I saw a sweet repetition of all that I had myself enjoyed. Secure as I thought myself in my own love, why should I not sacrifice a short time in rendering those who were dear to me as happy as myself? Our nuptials might be celebrated on the same day, the same feast might serve for all, the same route perhaps afterwards lead us to the consummation of our felicity. Generous and delightful hope, which came in beauty, and was invested in the semblance of truth, but which afterwards had the daring to reappear before me in the satanic shape of a liar!

One morning, at the hour of sunrise, being indisposed to remain in my chamber, I sallied forth among the woods to watch the silent manœuvres of the dawn. While nearing the lake, which extended in sight of the back windows of the mansion, then lost itself again in the woods, I saw a figure in the mist at the margin of the water, tearing his hair, and employing gestures to give expression to some violent emotion. It was Orazio! I hastened towards him with surprise, and in the fear that he might be contemplating some insane purpose, and demanded what evil spirit had troubled his repose? He was unwilling, however, to admit that I had perceived his agitation, and assumed a tranquil air, except in the eye, which the will, unaided by the heart, can never brighten. That was downcast, and encouraged by its wild yet sad expression, I insisted on knowing what cause had perturbed his mind.

"I love your sister!" was his answer.

"And I hope that she loves you!" said I, grasping him affectionately by the hand, and embracing him.

"Am I not too poor," rejoined he, "to offer my hand to one who, alas! was born to luxury?" and he was about to leave me, but I held him by the arm—

"Stay, my friend," said I, "I will proceed immediately to my sister's chamber, and acquaint her with your passion. Should she consent to accept you, her marriage portion will be amply sufficient to supply all your wants; therefore, let us anticipate joy only until we meet again." And I hastened to fulfil my mission.

I found my sister at her glass, and communicated to her the happiness which was in store for her; and although she was more shy of admitting me to a share in her thoughts than I had expected, the manner in which she received my message, her paleness, and the ardent kiss she impressed on my lips, while I clasped her in my arms, afforded me a sufficient reply to the problem which it had been my errand to resolve.

Before the night arrived, although not without numberless difficulties and objections on my sister's side, and as many sneers from Kunikos at Orazio's folly, the affair was decided. I left my sister under charge of a nun who had accompanied her from the convent, and her lover remained with her at the castle; while I, accompanied by the Greek, hurried off towards Sienna, to bring my own love affair to a conclusion. The whole of the journey, as far as Florence, was employed by Kunikos in satirizing the affections of women, and the weakness of men, but he did not succeed in dissuading me from proceeding on my route, and I left him at Florence to convince others of what he had failed to impress on me.

What is it in our nature which forces us to vent our feelings, when offended, on those whom we know are innocent?

I had arrived at my destination, and was crossing the lawn, when I saw Maria seated on the grass by another's side. Jealousy flowed deliberately into my heart, and I sternly approached the spot where they were. When within distinct sight of them, I perceived it was only a relation of the family of whom I need have had no cause to be fearful. But the pang had taken root, the frown had not subsided, and, with chilling coldness, I offered Maria my hand. She saw my altered demeanour, and turned as pale as death. I fervently grasped her hand, in hopes to correct my error; it was too late; every spark of affection had been violently extinguished; she saw I had suspected her. As I held her lifeless hand in mine, I remembered the pride of her race, and I felt that my doom was sealed.

Yes! I knew she was innocent, but I had not the hypocrisy to conceal the anguish which still stung me, although it had originated in suspicion alone. To give vent to emotion is a relief; to discuss the merits of our griefs with those we love, and from their lips be convinced they are unfounded, is a cure. I only sought a cure of Maria for the bitterness she had inadvertently caused me to suffer. She gave it, but withheld herself!

Perhaps it was well that family pride—in her, more the pride of virtue, but in her brother, of wealth, and in her mother, of descent—perhaps it was well that the offended pride prevailed over deep affection; for even her love might not have arrested me in the headlong current of my career. So long as I remained at the house, every day brought with it new feuds; we now as often differed in opinion and reproached each other, as we had once agreed in all things, although to a third person we still praised each other's perfections. Our voices, however, still met only in the bitterest accents; their slow tone of melancholy expressed feelings not the less severe, though the words dropped from the lips in convulsive emotion. Kunikos, I doubt not, though how I know not, had administered to me the poison!

Unwilling, perhaps, to show inhospitality, the mother, now grown haughty in her daughter's cause, and totally changed from the mild woman that she seemed, had planned a sudden departure from Sienna, with a view to pass into Lombardy, where Maria held certain lands. The evening was come which was to precede our separation. Seated together on a couch, there was, on that night, a suspension of reproaches; a proof that we still adored each other, awed into silence as we were, and almost into mutual forgiveness, by the approach of an awful-day. I resolved to reap a triumph over the proud but broken heart which was beating at my side. To triumph, thought I, is to possess, whether for good or evil; and if I have missed her person, I will load her soul with the misery of this foul quarrel.

"My dear Maria," said I, at the moment she was retiring to her chamber, and in a tone of earnest and diplomatic kindness, "can you yet find time to copy for me that pretty manuscript which we read together when I was here before? You made me the promise then!"

Maria burst into tears, and turned her head away. "I will do it," she replied, "if I sit up all night at my task."

"Maria! what has happened to me?" said I; "my mind is clouded with sorrows too dark for me to bear!"

"It has been your fault," was her reply; and retiring, she crushed with her eyelashes the confirming tear.

In the morning I stood at the carriage-door as early as the sixth hour, though they were not to depart until eight. I neither listened, nor replied to the invitation sent me to enter

and take refreshment, but stood outside the door in sullen silence. At length Maria and her mother appeared and ascended the carriage steps. I looked up at the former as I would have done at an image which has no glance, and surveyed every part of her dress, before taking a farewell look at her features. Every thing that she wore was new. She looked fairer than ever; but strange in her new habiliments; but the same long, black eyelashes increased the shade of early sorrow which tinged her chastened features. I was shocked to see her thus newly clad, as if she had wished to please strangers, when I, alas! should behold her no more!

She leaned forward to give me the manuscript, and would have spoken, but a convulsive sob checked her words, as the papers fell on the ground, where they were left. The mother threw out her hand to me as she had been wont, but I was still motionless, and made no return to her farewell; and the carriage rolled away. I watched the moving vehicle out of sight, and gazed long after it was invisible, till, remembering it would never reappear, I wept with my face towards the departed!

At this moment my own carriage appeared, and had passed the other on the lawn. I had not told Ferrini my plan, but ascended the vehicle without taking leave of him. He hobbled after me as fast as his lameness would permit, exclaiming—"You are not going to leave! Where then are you going?"

I turned round with looks of hatred and indignation, and pointing towards the Volterrana, replied in a voice of thunder, "I am going to my sister's wedding!"

I have spoken, then, my Pulci! of that child of my first affection, with the warmth of former years. As we advance in my confessions, she will resume her station among the early dreams of my life. Her memory has not been the least effaced by the ravages of sixty chequered years. I linger still, for it is to her that I look back for happiness as the good Catholic looks forward. She has left a monument in my heart which is sacred to pristine virtue.

Go thou, woman, to the tomb of our infant years again!

It demanded all my strength of mind to postpone the consideration of the past in relation to the influence which its events were to exercise over my present plans; for, convinced that my moral being was in a state of durance, I feared that any decision respecting myself might in some measure impede my sister's happiness, blight the prospect, or even entangle her fate in the dreadful chain of accidents which had begun already to enslave me.

I witnessed with a joyous countenance my sister's marriage; I drank with every guest at the wedding breakfast; I embraced the bride and bridegroom at their departure, gave them my blessing, and watched them away. The woods and waters where I had witnessed Orazio's despair, were then the scene of my meditations, and in the presence of nature, my feelings broke forth into a soliloquy too blasphemous to be repeated.

Disappointed of fame—labouring under a parental curse—degraded by a woman—these were the tributary streams which supplied my moral being: and by them I seemed pressed forward into the main channel of my destiny, whatever that might be. And, indeed, you will find my career thenceforth bolder, and my actions performed on a wider theatre. Nothing of a boyish character has since marked my actions; from that time all is solemn reality; I have been urged on from year to year through events the most sad and unnatural.

To my highly-wrought imagination the time seemed arrived for me to resume the reins of my literary chariot, which a few years before had received a violent check, and had stood still

on the high road to fame. It had stood still and remained where it was; the fiery griffins had reposed—they had snuffed in peace the æther which flowed forward in delicious gales, and they longed to follow again under my lash. My arm had been struck down by those highway robbers, the learned of the earth, who linger by the roadside to strike at unwary travellers, and rob them of the fruits of their talents;—but that arm was strong again, its sinews were braced; it could now defend itself against legions, and sway the monsters which were reined beneath it. I mounted my chariot once more—I looked above. Stretched across the arch from one end of the firmament to the other, I saw written, as on a rainbow, in characters of blood, this word—

#### TRAGEDY.

I saw, and laughed aloud in the face of heaven!

The truth had dawned; my vocation was gloriously revealed. With far other views than heretofore I now regarded my early sorrows, which had afforded me such experience of the dark side of human nature. I repined no longer at my fate. There appeared nothing in the ways of Providence but wisdom, when I thus saw present good springing out of evils which had ceased, and approaching greatness raised on a foundation of despair. I admired the system of things, I saw new laws developed in the government of the moral world; I believed that no charter of free will could provide for us the brilliant benefits which we obtain under the eternal constitution of necessity. In that government, suddenly I beheld myself a distinguished actor; the world of mournful thoughts and sad expression was made known. I was initiated into the mysteries of a tragical creation. My countenance was darkened, on my forehead was set a scowl, and as my fingers drew pathetic terrors from the lyre, I found gathered around me the shadow of the valley of death.

All that was dreadful had begun to affect me in a manner difficult to explain; it smote me with a feeling resembling religious awe. A tragical image appeared to my mind as a great divinity, and a deep, dark, and cruel thought would strike my soul to the earth in breathless piety towards the unknown sources of the sublime.

But before entering fully on my new career, I wished to consider, with clearness, the nature of my undertaking, of the object to which I was directed, and the instruments which were at my command. Tragedy can be contained only in the mind, and mind is the only tool with which its deep mines are to be opened. I looked at the mind, then, as stupendous in its dimensions, as a power which surpasses the universe in greatness; and which, as a mirror, reflects all its glory. I looked on this power as tranquilly intellectual, but I saw that its balance was so easily disturbed, that the commonest changes within itself were sufficient to counterpoise its awful calm. The greatest only of these internal commotions startled the genii of tragedy. And how were these produced? By mind acting on mind. This admitted, it appeared that artificial tragedy was not only capable of being produced by the sublime powers of man, but was also susceptible of a high degree of perfection. It was producible at will; and every description of horror might be generated in whatever part of the divine and universal soul the daring mind of one desired. These views I considered as truly great and original: and I repeat this, because susceptible minds, which are much more common than original, often pass current for true genius, while they are only the soil on which its seeds most easily take root and flourish. They are productive, but not creative.

The above reflections, however, remained long lost among the theories of my understanding, although they finally triumphed in practice.

At first I began, like others, by selecting the ideal beauties of crime from its barbarous commission; and this I effected with a refiner's skill. The mighty triumphs of vengeance arose in spiritual grandeur out of the act of retribution; justice ruled—the wicked fell. I then sought sympathy with the wretched, which was a more practical means, and one whereby I gathered the fruits of living pain without having sown the seeds. I implored for calamities to descend on my own head, and hailed them as lessons of inspiration when they came. I lamented that my habits of reserve, by rendering but few dear to me among men, had curtailed the circle of my sympathies, and limited my sorrow for others' woes, while it also tended to bound self-suffering—a thing which ever arises out of intimate relations with the world. But when a heavy trouble befel any of those few friends, I partook of all its agony, and in the midst would secretly exclaim—"O nature! how rich in bitterness of heart shall I now be!" and the exulting thought gave a tone of elevation to my distress.

At this time, living in magnificence in this fine palace, I entertained almost nightly the heartless and the great. But often, in the midst of laughter, some chance expression, or single word, would bring the tragic mood over me, and I would retire to my chamber, there to rip open wounds of affection or unrequited love, until they bled afresh into my heart. There have I sat, as one created but to endure, and, in a gush of pathos, inscribed my anguish on tablets to melt the breasts of strangers. The tears have dropped as fast as thought over the paper, and often have I been obliged to arrest my pen to hide my face in my hands, while I sobbed bitterly to remember that it was my doom.

These were the deeds of my early life. My study of tragedy, as yet innocent, was from nature. The immortal lessons of Bacon were in my memory; and the inductive system had begun its work in letters. Sedulously, however, I concealed the fountain whence I drew my ideas; and although as yet I had only applied them to fictions of ancient date, the public at last unwillingly acknowledged my merit; and thus forced to perceive that what I wrote was genuine, it gave me an ample share of fame.

My health was sacrificed to my anxiety to increase my reputation. My practices produced a deeper lesion on my frame than either licentiousness could have produced, or wine. But I saw that experience was the only true instructor, therefore clung with tenacious fidelity to the principles of my new system. Then I was uncorrupted and immaculate: would that I had so remained!

At one time, so sensitive was my mind, I could not have endured, or for a moment have entertained, the idea of voluntarily inflicting sorrow. That was the work of a malevolent power, great as whose influence is on earth, it is less on mortals than that of his Creator. But when I had mingled more with all ranks of men, and learned the heartlessness of my fellow-creatures, I gradually permitted myself to become hardened too. Reflection taught me what younger impulse had passed over, which is, that human providence has no wider function than that of turning evil into good. As this stage in the changes of my mortal nature was voluntary; as I had hardened my own heart by reason, I took especial care to provide that its sensibility should be unimpaired, a quality on which my success depended even more than on the new truths which a wider field of research, wider than the most ardent fancy had before conceived, was about to lay open to my mind.

Why should so noble a science as tragedy, one so universal in its powers of civilizing the barbaric passions, have the means of its extension curtailed? Were there not opportunities of discovering and working out its laws in persons whom it had been a virtue to torment; wretches whose unpunished crimes had prospered, and who were so well adapted by nature to the commission of crime, that they had no conscience to yield up repentance, or superstition to conjure up avenging ghosts? These were my reasonings, and they led me on to pursue higher principles, and my enlightened views did not turn out illusions.

Among the great enemies of mankind, which I had classed together with attention, dividing them into orders, genera, and species, as a natural historian would have arranged the beasts of the field, I gave a foremost station to those men who heartlessly trample on pure genius. And for this cause: all the good that is permanently effected for mankind is suggested by the superior powers which the few possess among the many. By genius the inconveniences of nature are smoothed down into comfort, the poverty of vast populations led on to wealth, the irregularity of the passions instructed in self-government, the intellect filled with truth, the passport to wisdom, and the imagination refined. To hurl this divine gift and giver on the earth, and crush it while yet a child, is therefore a greater crime than to betray our country into slavery; inasmuch as liberty itself is only the result of genius.

Again, next to its destroyers, I was led to class those who are the deceivers and misleaders of genius, and these are women. This branch of the creation, which might by its influence and example so elevate the purposes of all ranks, and which would be so certain of success in all its enterprises, takes delight in prostituting its power, and in effeminating the habits of men. Look at the great minds of nations; are they not the slaves of beauty? and while they contribute to debase it in its own opinion, by pandering to its silly wants, are they not ever at its side, selling even their reason for a smile?

This second class includes the whole of the female sex. The first takes cognizance of monarchs, whose crimes, however, in regard to genius, are negative; for it is an order which, from position, is above, and therefore unconnected with, the sphere of thought. Of ministers and public men, whose ears are ever closed;—whose proud hearts assume indifference towards, and whose intellect is unwilling to frame laws in favour of, the wants of genius. Lastly, of philosophers and literary men who may be enumerated as among the basest and most selfish of mankind. These creatures who have mostly risen from the dregs, and struggled through sentiment or mathematics, from poverty into pride, no sooner find themselves on a level with others, than they put an extinguisher on the filthy lamp of sympathy which burned in their breasts to light them on their way to greatness, and then light up the cold and waxen light. Let that genius, who, poor, the native of a squalid hut, sheds glory only over the rags which glow with his presence as they hang in tatters about his form, let him petition the literary man who is in prosperity, let him go through the humiliating and revolting ordeal of enclosing for his approval the stanzas which had descended on a thatchless cottage from heaven; will they not be returned unread? No! they will not be returned at all; but thrown by the icy hand of the prosperous into some vase which the devil, in his cunning, supplied them with to catch the productions of heaven.

This starving, ill-clothed, heart-broken, world-execrating pauper, in his despair, declares that he will not despair! He repeats his petition to a second, to a third, to a fourth; he humbly annoys every species of the literary order, however different their talents, their faces, their



professions! Twenty, thirty, forty, have refused to judge, to hear or reply! His despair, which now upholds him, though nearly, is not quite extinguished; he tries again and again, in another tone, to adapt himself to the various wit of the illustrious; but, alas! he ends by finding that one hundred leading minds are industriously employed in selling their talents to the trade, and cannot, for one moment, be induced to turn aside.

On these men especially had I fixed my scowl, whose black mark should distinguish them whenever the opportunity and day of retribution might arrive. Women, I also marked as victims; and in selecting the loveliest and most inoffending, I felt that the sex was more injured than if I had sacrificed the worthless and most vile. None appeared worthy of individual debasement; I rather acted on the broad principle of punishing the whole, and with that view placed the most distinguished and lovely on the sacrificial altar.

In selecting women as the victims of my zeal, I, in some measure, fell into my own snare, since it was difficult to feast my imagination on the pangs I inflicted, without being myself a sufferer, so strong was the action of sympathy which, through natural habit, I was forced to yield to. Indeed, I sometimes thought that I felt as much in the cause of others as I had once done in my own, while accustomed to inflict self-torture. However, the general result was satisfactory, and as long as it continued so, I was content to endure my pain.

Such was my progress, O Pulci! towards the attainment of poetic virtue.

I have now related how the first era of my life was passed in deep sympathy with my own misfortunes; the second, with the natural sorrows of my friends. In the third, a grand period, as you will presently hear detailed, I practised the principle of deserved persecutions, and collected a splendid variety of sensations which else had remained for ever undiscovered. Nor did the application of my inductive system end here; it led to the attainment of other results, and the development of principles so daring and so sublime, that were I to state them now without carrying your mind through the ascending links of the chain, the motives which were in operation would be little understood. Suffice it to say, I gloried in my work more and more, and daily treasuring up new emotions, I looked on my coffers of terror with avarice, and hoped in the end to raise a terrible monument to the mind. I became so absorbed in my pursuits, that they appeared to be natural, until sometimes smitten with a consciousness of my awful position, I would start in dread at myself. I was as a divinity of night who had no feelings in common with mortals, beyond the desire of shedding a ghastly gloom over the hated character of mankind.

It may be thought that I viewed the human race as only a multitude of faces which came out of the dust, for a time participated in what was established in the world, and then went down to the pit. Not so; the great truth of man's immortality gave a loftier zest to my persecutions. As it is probable that the human character will be greatly changed in a future state, I was led to reflect on how many lost passions go down ungratified to the tomb, and the idea demonstrated to me more clearly than ever the folly of not putting every instinct of our nature to the test of experience, if intellectual philosophy is to be understood. And is it not better to know all before we are mouldering in the grave? When we reach that unconscious clime, it is too late to repent our indifference.

Behold me, Pulci! now a remnant only of that which I have been, and still must I obey my ancient destiny, and consume what yet remains in thought. Though my body perish, and be

dispersed over the world, my mind has been its own salvation, surrounded in its deeds by the glory of a recording spirit. To perfect my work is now my only care; the experimental era has passed away. I have now only to add the spire of heaven-opposing immortality to the pyramid which contains my toils. Long ago would I have crushed this frail body, had my intellectual task been finished; but in the book of doom it was written, "Let mental suicide be his last of crimes."

Would that the time were come that I might cease from troubling, and enter on my eternal crown!

Am I forgiven the injuries I have done myself in the world's hard service? Yes; but not the desolations I have necessarily spread around me for the honour of the tragic throne. Never, since my youth, have I composed a work which was not first acted in real life; I, the inventor of the plot, the leader of the scenes. To feel well, we must acquire a universality of feeling; the experience acquired only from selfish suffering, is insufficient beyond the demands of a single tragedy; the wants of knowledge increase with the number of our compositions, and must be supplied by harrowing up the soul—by studying the broken heart. If we need a death-bed scene, we must repair to one, or we shall but unsuccessfully dramatise the dying soul! If a maniac is to be our model, we must introduce ourselves into the asylums of the deluded happy and unhappy, and write on the spot the direful workings of a soul decayed! And only in extreme necessity need we select a susceptible mind as a victim to be driven to distraction. Ah! cruel world! But bear this in mind as a maxim, that in sacrificing the innocent in a holy cause, if we use not every means within our most studied power of alleviating the sufferer's state, if we proceed not with as much gentleness and compassion as is consistent with the end in view, the honour of tragedy is sullied, her glory turned to shame.

"Oh! wretched man!" at length exclaimed the pious Pulci; "you relate these dreadful thoughts, these fearful usurpations of the divine justice, with a philosophy such as I never knew. O tell me by what right you assumed so dread a jurisdiction over the feeble soul? Some men have their errors, but the multitude is industrious, and governed by a sense of virtue. Then there are the mighty men of this world, and the wealthy, have you dared oppose yourself to all of these?"

The room rang with demoniac laughter as Pulci concluded his appeal, and its shouts rattled through the bones of a mammoth, which extended across the southern extremity of the room, and gave the chamber the appearance of being the library of some ancient animal that had died in meditation, and been left for time to convert its unforsaken resting-place into its tomb.

Didst thou speak of fear, O Pulci? Then thou knowest not the defiance of my soul! I should not fear on the last day to stand forth uncalled for, and make my own defence before the judgment throne. And as to right, it is a principle into which nothing in the heavens, in earth, or hell, can by analysis be resolved, except one, whose uncompounded nature is ever the same. All that we enjoy, or that we assume, is held on sufferance; there is nothing real but the benevolent justice of the Eternal, and he who was the creator of genius is not the destroyer too. He gives to man his place, he frames the law, and conforms the one to the other. Had I with this same nature been a king, I should not have been a tragedian. But I am what I am, because there was need of a moral revolution. My function has been to alarm men's minds by means of the tragic sermon, to write which I needed the fresh inspiration of nature. Would you forfeit the works of

the illustrious, if, now that all is passed, the wars, the private troubles, the iniquities, the abominations, which they so nobly record, could have never been? Would it not rather injure, to remove such speaking examples, than serve mankind? It would not prevent fresh crime. Listen, then, my friend, to reason; console yourself on little matters, and, taking cognizance of eternity only, forget that this is time. I know I shall convince you in the end.

To return to my narration: many lovely women became the victims of my zeal, and, for poetry's sake, were driven to despair; but they suspected not, nor could I reveal, that they supplied ideas to the noblest aspirations of the soul. When I have gazed with outward sympathy on their beautifully insane passions, they have not suspected my calm enjoyment of the naked tempest of the breast, and varying attitude of just and noble anger. Far from lamenting my conduct, the priceless results have been enhanced in value by the extent of the sacrifice, and I have only grieved that common decency has not permitted me to sit down and dramatise each awful scene before their eyes.

Nature allows us but a single path; therefore, as we are organized, we must act. Think not, my Pulci, that I myself selected this heartless occupation in preference to the peaceful life of a citizen. The talent was discovered; its province was revealed. I exorcised it in my pious moments, I distressed it with prayer, but the demon clung to me, exclaiming, "Why dost thou torment me? Is not sorrow thy consolation?"

Thus I have wandered the earth to instruct mankind in misery; I have raised a standard of rebellion against the tyranny of established joy; no man ever boasted of being indebted to me for a lasting smile.

If there be a delicate point in the practice of the tragedian, it is so to balance his actions with a sense of duty as to give his conscience a slight advantage, which absolves him from the necessity of confession to the church. In this he succeeds best by bearing this excellent principle in mind, "never to inflict more torture at a time than can be safely borne." For my own part, I have narrowly watched my victims, and when there has been the slightest cause to suspect the heart would break, I have administered kindness until it has caused the sufferers' gratitude to overflow. No! never have I left a creature to despair, but have endeavoured to heal every wound by making such false promises as would last until time itself effaced the memory of what had been, and brought new associations to the mind.

## CHAPTER III.

IN pursuing this dark career of ambition, I had no other end in view than to elevate the Tragic School. I succeeded beyond my first desires, and cannot but think that a history of the sources of my writings is due to letters. As I proceed it will be yet more clearly seen that selfishness was never my first impulse, but rather anxiety for the honour of the age and its literary character. And may it be to us a credit when a future people shall exclaim, "We date a new literary epoch from the time of Vate de' Medici the Florentine!"

Except that the gods record not their actions, my conduct has been on a godlike scale. I have acted for man; not the individual, but the race. I could gaze inwardly for ever on my motives and the memory of deeds, to never see a stain; and casting my eyes around, I encounter only emblems of my glory. Such is the recompense of the daring, of the just! The groveller studies his mortal part; he gratifies the passions which contribute to his present enjoyment: for my part, when beauty was within my reach, I only philosophized over temptation.

If, while I contemplated a lovely woman I might desire to possess her love, it did not follow that I wished to love her too; she only afforded me the means of calmly fathoming the nature of a female soul. There is something mystical at first sight in a new beauty; it is equal to what the natural philosopher calls a new phenomenon. For example: an eye different to any other, and still beautiful; an expression indicating an association of mental gifts on some new plan of the Creator! These things are not to be disregarded by the poet, and to avail himself of them he must possess their possessors. I will now relate to you the original history on which *Giuditta dell' Angelo*, my favourite tragedy, is founded.

Is there not a connecting harmony between a sweet landscape and its adorning figures? From the order of the one, may we not anticipate the beauty and proportions of the other? Let our thoughts now repose within one of the gardens of Val d'Arno, what sentiment is expressed by the flowers! If the orange is only fragrant, the camilla is brilliantly chaste, and the rose, so often plucked by lovers, blushes at its naked bloom. The fresh breeze of morning attenuates the lustre of a rising sun, and fountains sparkle in its yet cool beam. Under the shades of the cypress, behold a living shape—the young, the meek *Giuditta*! In her form there is a lightness which belongs to the spirit; in her complexion is seen the alabaster shaped to thought, and softened by the dew of life. Her eyes have imbibed the blue of the sky, and they yield it light in return, lest heaven should claim her for the theft, and rob the earth of its proudest emblem. Between every limb and feature there is that indefinable sympathy of which in vain we seek the centre, lost in the abyss of beauty! I saw, and was panic-struck with excess of pleasure.

O, why should this great world toil for ever in producing such models to only people the unvisited Far with Souls?

O! woe unto the works of God! how often doth it happen that the outward charm is not emblematic of the mind! The messengers of creation, by whom the outer form is so highly wrought, neglect not a feature's shade, but they too often slumber over the greater task within: and, like the sculptor, know not how to endow with soul! In Giuditta there was all the mind that woman, in her sad position, needs; and there was a pausing gentleness which can ravish more than thought—but as to her knowledge, all had been taught her; it was beautiful before it was her own. Had I required of her the swelling impulse and its aspirations, I might have waited in vain, for she had not felt emotion, but was as habitually calm as the future.

I loved to look at Giuditta, although it was with as little passion as when I haunted the chiselled marble with my gaze. If she would but be silent and statue-like, she pleased me yet more than sculpture. There was a pure expression in her face which was solely created by the features, and they were so fine that one ray of intellect, whether reflected, or from within, illumed and gave them the aspect of solid light.

Her figure was tall and haughty; it moved over the earth in the majesty of a swelling wave on the waters. The world seemed subdued as she stood upon it. I have looked at her as she passed me, and pursued her with my eyes; I have followed and overtaken her fascinating steps, to watch her again out of sight; for she was worthy the contemplation of a tragic philosopher.

I could not love her, much as I desired so to do. My mind was angered, and beauty only reminded me that my heart was steeped in the bitterness of the past. Beauty and Virtue!—let me not record it all—these had been my bane! And meet them again, in whatever shape, I felt that irony must be my passion, and satire the impulse of my breast.

She pleased me, for she was lovely, true, and adoring; and these are qualities so pleasing in a woman, that it is to be lamented when they happen to be misplaced. She was a new and more beautiful Maria in fancy, but not in truth. Without any unkind sentiment, I could not avoid exclaiming within me, when I saw her first raptures—(the blossoming of the bud of love!)—"Thou art in my power! I have thy affections, and though I would not injure a hair of thy head, I am able to trample thee beneath my feet." But smiles, while I thus spoke, were hovering round the thought, like children at play with the tame lion; and I kissed her to give my spirit a proof of its own meekness. Such, indeed, was sometimes my deep calm, that, starting up, I have uttered—"Cursed are they that mourn!"

Though my eyes admired, I dared not express too much pleasure while resting my glances on Giuditta. I seemed desirous of prolonging that new state of my existence in which I loved a woman as I would a statue; and while her love burned, I returned only a statue's affection. I visited her daily at the same formal hour, and, seated by her side, I would perhaps once salute her white, cold, forehead, or place my arm round the almost intangible circle of her spiritual waist, in asking what she thought of love! Proud was her august nature, but she dared not arise from the slavery of meekness before me; in my strange smile she saw tyranny, on the lip of mildness; in my eye sternness softened by long gazing at heaven! But she watched me, as an ambitious person watches the events of time, and in intervals of calm she selected her way to my bosom.

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*The Chapel*

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*John H. P.*

ordinary trials of affection. Still a feeling sometimes would awake within me in favour of that fine form; and across the calm and tranquil weather of the spirit, which had succeeded to its last great tempest, the lightning of desire would dart; but when this threatened to melt the snows of my inward desert, I hurled the thunder into its track, and chased it from the abode of desolation. The warm emotion soon returned in suicidal terror to its source, and perished on the confines of the heart. Then, to prove to myself my indifference, I would hold Giuditta in my arms, until I felt that my caresses were unimpassioned.

Yes! often would a momentary impulse dispose me to melt before that sun of beauty, whose pious light issued from the sky-like depths of those azure eyes. My gentler nature was often moved. When she saw this, her adoring gaze would continue on me too long, and an impatience of being observed would succeed to my fugitive delight. I then turned away; my expression changed; and anger had to struggle like a demon before it could create a smile.

Thus time would pass in a manner dreadful to Giuditta; for instead of finding in me society for her deep love, she saw only a desolating solitude. Her passion advanced towards frenzy, but this only showed me that I was to be avenged on her sex. My blighted hopes, instead of reviving under her auspices, were only like lovely plants which the frost had silvered, and which were in character with a frozen region, and a severe clime. I strove to check her raptures; an almost invisible satire curved my lip when I spoke kindly; it increased by slow degrees, lest instead of only suspecting, she should discover my coldness. But I approached too near the brink of reality, for she felt all along, instead of but partially detecting, my entire contempt for passion.

The Greek theatre is indebted for its grandeur to the depth of its foundations. The action of the play rises out of something terrible which has already happened, and which, from the manner in which it is commented on in the first scene, appears, so well known, that the characters are at once established in importance, and the author inspired by familiarity with the history, takes his flight into loftier stations of resolving passion. He has only to look back to receive natural strength; there his subject asserts its noble origin, its ancestral greatness, its right to present fame: but the modern genius relies more on inspiration from above; he puts his glistening eyes and vacant thought towards heaven, he sits entranced, until a voice or an image awakes in his fancy the hallelujahs of the blessed, or the deeds of contending angels.

I had now learned Giuditta by heart. At first she had appeared before me in the light of a modest, happy woman, indifferent to all things save virgin innocence! Soon she became changed into a picture of anxious smiles, of innocence full of strange anticipation! Next, her clear eye was clouded by thickening doubts; the dark tresses seemed to lengthen by the side of the pallid face, the lips to move in silent, thoughtful, and distressful expression, which showed the calm of life to be disturbed by a troubled dream. And lastly, as if some strong element of intelligence had rushed from its harmonious relations, and tranquil seat, the living features seemed torn, and dismantled of their sweetness, like a garden of Valdarno after a tempestuous season.

At this period I listened to the suggestions of events, and being fed with emotions of no ordinary kind, I was convinced that the type of that great class of actions, which afterwards formed my character in the colossal mould of cold-blooded, agonizing ambition, was becoming developed. I had no sincere religion, no moral system; but the grand world of passion, and its

sky above, reflecting all hope on its own deep ocean, seemed given me in trust by way of Soul; and I held it as with divine liberty. Why, then, should I, who had been spurned by virtue in a woman's youthful shape; whom parental feeling, in the melancholy guise of madness, had disliked and cursed; whom mankind had marked with disaffection—why should I contribute delicious moments to the world? It is well for those who are in its favour to toil after its flatteries;—but let its outcasts loathe it a degree more than they loathe their exiled lot, and its banished genii glare on it in the lustre of infernal mockery.

The circumstances of Giuditte's love presented me with a good foundation for tragedy, and I systematically resolved to carry on the acts with a rapidity which might allow the unity of time to be preserved, or, at least, deducible from the rapidity of the events. When I thus speak, however, it is not to be supposed that my plot was wilful; it came to my practical genius as naturally as thoughts descend on the thinker. I was involved on every side; there was no escape; pursue or relinquish, there must still be a catastrophe, preceded by scenes of trouble. Then why resign the excitement, and do violence to my nature in rejecting so splendid a train of woes?

Is not my reasoning convincing? for how idiotic would it not have been to commend to peace a charmed spirit, and have bidden her not to hope! Should I have told Giuditte of my first passion? It would, indeed, have shed a new light over the despair of her adoring soul, for it is marvellous how much the sexes sympathize in each other's disappointments in love; and especially when they love one another!

Should I not have fled her presence for ever? Alas! she would only have pursued me with looks of anguish, and never have turned her gaze away.

It was night. Giuditte and her lover were in the garden of her father's house. There was a seat near the river, on which we sat, while the waters before us wound their way through the vale, receiving from the shaded moon irregular masses of light and shadow so finely combined as to appear mutually to enlighten and darken each other. The trees looked blackly distinct in the distance, but we were visible to each other while conversing in the midst of the broad sheet of descending light; all gloom had passed behind into our shadows.

"All nature, except ourselves," said Giuditte, "is in harmony the most perfect at this hour. But you appear the same both by night and day. No sun, no moon, nor star presided at your birth, or now charms you into affection. Would that you were less, or that I were greater! Your love is like the sun itself, which has no companion, which looks at distant systems for its equal. You love me!—oh, do not look so solemn!—as much as you can love a mortal; yet it is but an interest that you feel, a high regard—the protecting and cold affection which the Alps have for the flowers within their valley. Or, it is as this fair moonlight, which, investing all beneath in beauty, bestows not one warm ray on all."

"Giuditte! when I look on thee, I acquire a glory, but a glory less easily felt than known. It springs not from my heart, but emanates from thy presence; and while it lasts, confers on my spirit the semblance of eternal rest. I can only admire thee still;—my affections are not below; though had I destined my own being, they had now been on thee. But we are not as we would be—we have no creative power—the model of the soul was not of our design; our emotions rise involuntarily out of the deep space within us, the pit of tormented joys whose depths

have never yet been fathomed except by tears! They rise, and until they have appeared we know not what they are."

"Ah! why are you so superior a being to the rest of men, not participating even in what is human? Am not I like you, of flesh and bone, and yet do you look down on me as a divinity on a mortal!"

"I am not devoid of feeling, but thou knowest not the names of my griefs."

"If you ever feel, is it for another? Alas! no—it is for the jarrings of your thoughts, the discords of your passions! When others address you, their earnest words pass not your ears, but alight on your lips to weigh them down into a sneer."

"Judge not rashly what thou canst not comprehend! My happiness has passed away. The pursuits of broken hearts are tranquil. Once was I as the sacred city, in which by day and night there was much rejoicing. Desolation swept over it, the palaces were thrown down, the walls dismantled; its youth was smitten into sudden age. Look at that city now, and what dost thou behold? A heap still mighty in ruin, the haunt of silence, the shelter of timid peace! Even as is now that city, so, Giuditta, am I!"

"And are there not," she asked, drawing her arm through mine, and reposing her cheek on my shoulder—"are there not those who prefer even to Paradise itself, to wander amid the ruins of a splendid past?"

"They may love it," said I, with a convulsive laugh, "but whether they roam in sorrow or meditation, the desolations make no reply to their zeal, but immovable in decay, still manifest their solemn warning, whether visited or unseen by the pilgrim."

"And such is the cruel fate of all who look on thee!"

"Remember how unworthy is the ruin of the majestic thought which is wasted among its shades. The worlds of light are thine, and not the regions of eclipse, or their cavern-haunting melancholy. While we here repose, with feelings as great as though we were the authors of this scene which is clad in the full dress of beauty, what do we see around us so great as thou? All creation descends a grade lower to acknowledge that thou art here;—in thy presence humility best becomes it. But when its worship is finished, it arises in thee beyond itself; it claims thee for its goddess, and, accepted by thy smile, becomes divine. But hear me, thou daughter of Nature and Heaven's first love! The things below with which thou thus dost harmonize, offer thee, nor the muffled reproach nor echoed praise; thou mayest neglect or adore at will, and mighty is thy liberty!"

"And why are you so superior a being to the rest of men?"—

We proceeded pensively to the villa; a thought suggested by the preceding sentence, a thought most mighty, had struck on the reverberating chords of my laughing heart; a chorus of tragic demons took up the strain, and my breast rang with the melody of impious crime. I felt as if the Eternal reigned within me, approving for the first time the high conceptions of evil; I thought that the universe was assembled round me in admiration, and that time had brought an illuminated page from heaven to receive the records of my toil and sorrow.

"Why are you so superior a being to the rest of men?" were Giuditta's words. From the time they were uttered I wore an air of mystery on my pale and thoughtful brow, and assumed a look more exalted than belongs to a creature of this world. By art I illumined my forehead,

and the mock radiance appeared such as streams around the head of a Saint. She saw it at our nocturnal meetings, but it vanished and reappeared before her dizzy vision; still her eyes, in the dimness of adoration, wandered in the midst of the divine lustre, or remained fixed in supernal doubt and fear. I smiled on her with the force of lightning which wheels round its object ere it smites; and pouring into her soul a silent conception of my superhuman nature, she dropped thought-smitten on my breast, and rested there in the breathing death of trance.

I left her to awake alone, that the hateful solitude of love, and the dungeon-aspect of all around it, might startle the first glance of her reopening eyes.

I visited her at an unusually early hour one morning, to pursue in practice the thought which now solely occupied me, and to which the credulous though lofty Giuditte offered every prospect of success. I can present you with but a feeble idea of the effect that the thought produced on my sensitive being at the moment when first it struck me. A suddenly gathered emotion of grand delight rushed like a thunderbolt through my frame; I glowed till the heat-drops bedewed my brow, and trembled as one clasped in the giant embraces of eternal fame.

Those words were common, but their application was sublime; their dread suggestion had impressed itself on the forehead of my mind. I entered Giuditte's chamber with humility and downcast eyes; I spake not, looked not, except towards the earth; and my solemn manner and godlike smile commanded her for some minutes to silence. While she stood in mute astonishment, and dared only press to her lips my outstretched hand, I meditated my scheme with unquiet thoughts.

"Unconscious maid! must not my enterprise draw down on thee innumerable sorrows, and on me the vengeance of Heaven?" but I felt impelled by a strong, though pleasureless motive; my fate was there—I could not desist; so, regretting once more a doom which was leading me from one evil to another, I sobbed inwardly with feelings of self-compassion!

Giuditte had sunk at my feet.

"Ah! what can mean this scene?" said she, as her lovely eyes ascended timidly to my face.

"Speak not unto me now, but meet me to-night in the chapel of the Medici," was my reply; and, kissing with mystery her icy forehead, I continued, in a mournful whisper, "I am not of this world!"

She gazed on me with superstitious wonder as I slowly left the room.

I hastened to the execution of the project I had designed of imposing on Giuditte the belief that my nature was divine—a belief, which, judging from what had escaped her, I conceived her soul prepared to receive, provided the proofs which I could bring to bear were sufficiently striking to convince a person in her excited state. When I mention to you the name of Abbate Bernabò, it will bring to your recollection his celebrity and the strange honesty of his career. Many of the hours and days of my youth were spent in his society, and quickly did they vanish to be replaced by funds of knowledge. He lived in the Via di Bisogno on a terzo piano, and there he passed his life in sublime meditation. In the latter days of Judea his ancestors were magicians, and could cast out devils with their unholy power, and to him their art had descended. He had initiated me into the mysteries of a science through the practice of which the crafty men of old had subdued the vulgar into obedience and fear, and among other arts he had taught me a method of producing phantoms of the dead and living. I was a great favourite with the learned

father, and his liberal explanations of things, in themselves sufficiently strange to extinguish the spirit of inquiry, had a decided influence in the formation of my daring character. The illusions of optics and alchymy, which are capable of producing sudden and irresistible belief, he demonstrated to me so practically, that I have ever since been free from superstitious misgivings. Nor did the effect of his instructions cease there; for when I saw how the laws of nature could be directed to the production of apparently supernatural phenomena, I perceived, by a process of analogical reasoning, that the laws of mind were equally capable of being perverted for the tyrannic purposes of man.

After leaving Giuditta, then, I sought this worthy instructor, and laid before him my purpose. I told him that in my gallery, I had a splendid cast of the Salvatore bearing a cross, and also an excellent bust of myself, and that I wished, without delay, to have the head removed from the figure, in order that my own bust might replace it. I wished to have my own head on the shoulders of the statue.

"Child of genius!" said the father, "what new enterprise is now forming in thy subtle world?" As he spoke the Abbate raised his eyes from his book and softened his benevolent features into a radiant smile.

"My dear father!" I replied, "thou art the most talented in the land! Ask no questions to-day, but assist me in my present need!"

He gazed earnestly at me for a few moments, and replied—"It shall be done by the day after to-morrow."

I was alarmed at the delay, for I was that night to meet Giuditta at the chapel. I knew, however, that it was in vain to appeal to the Abbate; his head had fallen towards the unintelligible page which was before him; his soul had plunged into its deep abyss of truth; it was not to be summoned up again. He was no longer conscious of his own, much less of my presence; it was therefore necessary to brook the delay. What could I do? I was in the hands of a propitious Fate, and therefore did not despair that when the moment of my coming interview with the lovely victim arrived, it would suggest to me what to say and do.

The evening came. When I entered the chapel, the young Giuditta, with her countenance veiled, had already arrived, and was kneeling before an image of the blessed Virgin. With a pale and exhausted look I approached her; a smile saddened my lips; tears dropped in silence from my eyes. For many hours during that day I had been wrapped in holy meditation; the sacred writings had been opened by me; I had drunk of the pure draught; my spirit had absorbed pure sentiments—had bathed in the hallowed well of wisdom. Yes, I had read and felt in the calm dignity of a Catholic, and was full of inspiration. Thus sated with blessed consciousness, sweet were the tears which dropped like the dissolving heavens over the sunshine of my face.

I took Giuditta by the hand, and led her to the altar; nor was I unmindful of my olden reverie, in which I led another there; and the recollection whispered the word retribution in my ear. Retribution, not revenge; for the baser passions of my nature were now relieved by others more worthy of life. I was like a sinner highly justified by his mountain-moving faith, and anointed as ambassador of Heaven to the earthly Court of Sin.

"On this spot, O Giuditta! we shall shortly be united for ever. But the star which harmonizes our destinies, even as the mingling sounds of music, hath not yet reached its home. On the evening after the morrow, at this hour, its course will be completed, and it will stand in

brightness over the place where we now are. Our union will not be terrestrial, for I am not of this world. Our bonds will be spiritual, and such as the grave cannot sever. The grave knows only itself, it knows only eternal sleep; in its sepulchral gloom it rejoices not in the eternity of life and light!

"Though I sojourn upon earth, my interests there are few; the time of my mission is brief. Thou hast been permitted to discover whom I am. We meet again. Let thy hours be passed in fasting and prayer."

"Stay, holy being! tell me to whom to pray!"

I looked on her with a reproachful smile, and she uttered—

"On thee shall my thoughts dwell; and thee alone will I worship!"

She sank on her knees; I gazed unmoved and passionless on her uplifted eyes. At that moment she felt her loneliness to be most appalling. Not a sign of sympathy in me while thus she lay prostrated by superstitious love; no object in the world but me, the unfathomable dispenser of her terrific destiny. She clung to my knees, and wept in loud accents of forsaken misery; though hoping, she realized no hope; the future seemed by some dread act to have extinguished its advent; the present seemed too heavily laden to advance. As she wept, her raven hair was loosened and hurled over her shoulders by the mighty sob. I was affrighted by the cruelty of my work into pity; my icy fabric melted. I raised her, and she fell into my arms with a deep, terrible, and convulsive gasp of anguish.

The effect on me was tremendous, awful! I held in my arms the beauty of an angel clothed in the misery of earth. The thought smote me with a feeling true to the immortality of my hopes; I folded her breast to mine that I might feel its desolation, and a glow of tragic glory, like a torrent, rushed through me. I pressed her closer and closer, and like the chords of a discordant harp, I continued to thrill.

It is no blessing, O Pulci! to have been born a tragic bard.

By the appointed night, the statue, being completed, was placed by my direction in a gallery situated above and on one side of the altar, and concealed from view by a massive column. I was furnished with a large concave mirror, a lamp of intense power, and a musical instrument. The priests, to whose care the chapel was assigned, were feasting at my table; I therefore stood in no fear of an interruption by them. From my childhood I was distinguished for the sweetness with which I breathed through the modulated avenues of the richest of musical instruments. I could cause it to express sounds which seemed born in air; which betrayed not the mechanism by whose means they attained to melodious being. Music lulls suspicion, and I brought its simple magic to my aid.

The night was chilly, dark, and tempestuous. The wind passed in noisy billows over the earth, its moanings seemed to issue from the wintry sepulchres of creation—tombs which spread farther to the east and to the west than the cemeteries of man, and whose monuments are the barren rocks and the deserts, and over whose remains the blasted and leafless forest only sheds the sorrowing recollection. The night was terrible, and thunder commanded the storm.

I had been in the chapel nearly an hour when I heard the footsteps of women. They approached the altar. It was Giuditta, accompanied by an old governante. She was afraid to venture a second time alone. I was unprepared for such a contingency, and while gazing from my secret place at the companion, I felt almost disposed to arrest the progress of my scheme.

Indeed, I decided on a pause, yet, strange to tell, with that decision on my lips, I proceeded in my work, led on by some controlling power which acted as the will of my will.

I kindled my lamp, and having strongly illuminated every part of the statue, I reflected an image of it, by means of my concave mirror, into the cloud of incense that curled upwards before the altar. The apparition was complete; it hung like a spirit in the air. I seized my flute and wept forth the most touching strains.

The melody attracted the attention of the virgin and her companion. They looked up and beheld the glorious figure of the Saviour floating before them as in a cloud. The effect it produced on the minds of the two beholders was very different. Giuditta saw, but whose countenance, whose smile? She gazed on the colourless and ghastly vision, and still gazed, at first with human, and afterwards with superhuman effort, until astonishment fixed her eye on the inexplicable scene. She was still conscious, for the heavens seemed opened, and the Son of Man to descend, and she feebly raised her arms to receive her eternal bridegroom. Was it not a dream?

She continued to gaze; her arms once raised, remained fixed; she at length gasped for breath, turned deathly pale, uttered a faint scream, and sank on her face into the deep ecstasy of trance. In this state of fascination she for a long time remained, and to perpetuate the enchantment, I poured a fresh flood of music on her soul. She heard, but neither dared nor had strength to raise her face again, but there in holy fear she lay as if in the visible presence of Heaven.

The music ceased, and the light was reflected on the pavement before her, that the marble glowed as with an intense flame. And in a well-known voice she heard these words uttered: "Thou art my beloved bride!"

The incense ceased to ascend, the vision disappeared, and silence fell like a curtain over the scene.

Such was the success of my spectral illusion on the pious spirit of Giuditta; she was prepared by her beauteous nature to look holiness in the face, and when the time arrived her piety only was excited. Not so with the governante; her soul was a mass of iniquity and spiritual filth, and fit only to manure the barren soil of hell. The sight of what appeared holy in the vision smote her: without words she was judged, without replying, self-condemned. She saw her doom within herself; she found that the hope of mercy, which, with the just, springs out of reason, had, with her, taken its foul and rancid growth in imagination; she found that it was only a poisonous weed which had sprung up in the unhealthy tropics of the soul; that the flowers which it bore were nauseous, while those of virtue were sweet as the lilies of the vale. Yes! the conscience of the governante rose, like a spirit of the damned, before her, and struck her to the ground. Her wrinkled visage was convulsed, her mouth was drawn aside, and foamed, and her eyes worked in their sockets as if smitten by a curse. With her wild arms she beat her parent earth, and with ineffectual struggle she gasped at the plenteous air, and died.

After a lengthened interval, Giuditta arose, and rested on her knees that she might pray! And oh, how beautiful was her prayer! I watched her benign attitude, and sank also on my knees while I listened. I dared not accompany her prayer; I dared not repent too soon. I almost believed myself to be a divinity as her orisons struck my ear. She finished, and with a calm aspect arose and left the chapel.

I descended to the altar, and moved the governante's body with my foot to see if it were a corpse. It was; for it was elastic, and rebounded to the spot whence I had endeavoured to roll



it. The business of its soul, whatever it might have been, was done; either its fortune was made, and it was in bliss; or it was the bankrupt inhabitant of a fiery prison. I thrust a purse of gold into the clenched hand as an offering from the body to the priest for those prayers whose virtue bursts the chains of purgatory asunder; and as a bribe for him to be as silent as the aisle, lest relatives, or descendants should appear in their need, and claim as their inheritance the price which the holy father has been taught, by tradition or scripture, to affix to the final ascent of souls, else damned, to heaven.

I had now performed all the duties of that night; but before quitting the mansion of eternal hope, I addressed myself to the Auditor of Prayer in thoughts and accents most imploring. For hours I continued in the presence of my Maker, confessing, although only what he already knew; and repenting, until drops of agony stood on my forehead. I begged hard to be conducted into a new state of feeling; to be endowed with a new pursuit. At last the dark mists of conscience seemed to dissipate, and beams of spiritual light to penetrate the gardens of thought. I was tranquil and happy. Thus refreshed, I retired with light steps, passed direct to my chamber, and spent the remaining hours of the night in that pure oblivion, to awake suddenly from which resembles a new birth.

When I arose I sallied forth into the open air with the subdued excitement of one who was about to reach the brink of the precipice, and to plunge headlong into reputation.

Did Giuditta sleep? She did, if dreams be sleep. Though her eyes closed, they still rested on the vision, and her ears were still awake to the music. The night was charmed away—it fled like a moment, and yet appeared most eventful when gone. When the hours are in love with mortals, how swiftly they pass; but when they hate, how their vengeance lingers!

When the sleeper awoke, there was no change in her inward being; she continued to see, to hear: though the eyelids opened, the eyes remained fixed on the same vision, the joys of which were indicated by recurring smiles.

As the admitted lover of Giuditta, I was summoned to her bedside, and informed that she had neither moved nor spoken during the morning. I was alarmed at the intelligence, and, for a moment, shrank from the task I had undertaken of conducting the tragedy to its issue. I lost confidence in my powers, true genius being timid in proportion to its greatness.

I walked into Giuditta's presence, conducted by her unsuspecting mother. I did so with borrowed firmness, while I inwardly called on nature to support me through my trial, and on fate to exercise the prerogative of his kingly will. When I entered, her eyes were rivetted to the wall; her glance was transfixed by objects visible only to her mental sight. I accosted her with a solemn smile, and involuntarily raised my arms. She fixed her hands for devotion, and turned her humble eyes towards mine. She smiled; but in a moment her countenance relapsed into vacancy of expression, and there, for a long time, I wandered over the Ruins of a Mind.

Her mental existence had passed away.

I raised her and pressed her in my arms. My touch thrilled with a fearful sensation through the remnants of her shattered heart; she uttered a faint shriek, and, through exhausted agony, sank back insensible on the pillow of death.

I was glad to hasten from the house, and was too much overcome to address the relatives of the unhappy maid. No sooner was I out of sight than I smote my forehead with the palm of

my hand, and, taking the Sacred Writings from my pocket, exclaimed, "Swear, this instant, O Vates! swear by the harmony which thou hast destroyed, that thou wilt never wilfully again commit a crime!" I replied to myself, with this dreadful oath: "If ever I wilfully sin again, which I will not!—may Rome deny me absolution!"

"Pulci! I have sinned again. I hurled to the ground the mirror by which the heavens had been reflected on my soul in witness of its oath, and shivered it to atoms; I stamped on the fragments until not a vestige remained. I did all this—and why?"

As I spoke, I approached Pulci to whisper my reason in his ear, but he fled from me in consternation; and, seeing his terror, I shouted the dreadful words of explanation—"I have no guardian angel!" and I laughed in the bitterness of despair.

How is it, O Pulci, that whenever reason tells me my heart is bad, my feelings contradict it? Believe me, never was man more ready than I to assist the infirm with my own hands, to bestow my charity on the poor, or to clothe the destitute. Why then was I cruel? It was expedient; and I possessed the power. The good, the intellectual, the great are raised above obedience to human laws, the work of their own wisdom, as much as a divinity is above his creatures. The great man knows only general principles, and, acting on them, produces the greatest possible quantity of good out of right and wrong. Thus he punishes the guilty as examples—the end is good, the means evil. But what do I perform? O splendid truth!—Listen attentively, and hint of it to princes, ministers, and people—I punish the innocent that the guilty may be chastened! That they may be also stricken with fear at the enormities to which vice can attain; and, at the same time, feel degraded in the continuance of vulgar crime: for between those two last sentiments lies virtue! Such then were my real motives: I would not wantonly have trodden on a worm.

Perhaps you cannot, in one moment, grasp the entire thought: reflect then on its application. Though a priest, I doubt not that you have often walked into the Chamber of the Tribune and looked with delight on the Medicean Venus!

"I certainly have."

"Suppose," I continued, "you had possessed such a being in reality, and had found extraordinary excitement in destroying all her beauties, step by step—as, leaf by leaf, you might destroy a flower for which you had no other use—or suppose that you had read of such a sacrifice so often, that it formed one of the best scenes in your memory; think you that you could afterwards brutally murder the low and revengeful, however much they might have excited your dislike? No! When refinement is once introduced into crime, there can be no murder; for no one, but myself, could kill a lovely woman; and no one else would, after so beautiful a sacrifice, be content to be vulgarly avenged on his species."

The monk was staggered by my reasonings; but his feelings shuddered, and by them he was controlled: I therefore thus continued in my attempt to persuade him of my good intentions.

A cruel man, with much intellect, may have a better heart than a kind man, who has but little. For the greatness of his reason leads the former to extend his benefits over the universe, in doing which he is forced to trample all opposition under his horse's hoofs, until he gains the goal; while the latter retires into his barn and sheds tears over the dying agonies of a faithful dog. In shallow minds the communication between objects of pity, and pity itself is too direct. The philosopher passes the pathetic through the sieve of reason, and oh! how little passes

through its delicate wirework into the heart! The death of a great man was never announced to me without producing a sob; and when sense and emotion, as in such a case, understand each other, the breast swells not with sentiments less mighty, it is not the less proud of being human, or of sympathising in the troubles of the worthy. Sympathy loves Equality! The dog howls over his dead companion; a king mourns at the death of kings: but the monarch seldom beholds the carcase of a dog, and dogs fawn not upon royal corpses. True sympathy is not to be depraved, for it is the greatest work of the Creator; it extends beyond himself; he made it as his own companion!

Nothing in nature produces so much mental exaltation as sympathy with the past. Let a quiet chord of memory be accidentally touched, a whole train of former feelings is awakened, not in the same intensity as when they first lived, but like an old and well-preserved picture softened and mellowed by long repose. And if there have been a period of oblivion, brief though its duration, between the time when first and last that feeling came, its resurrection may appear to recall days long past, as if all that happens had some far back type amid olden records of memory; records, which unwilling to be disturbed, have founded for themselves ancestral resting-places within the first-inhabited regions of the soul. He who has studied the antiquity as well as the immortality of the spirit, will feel these truths; he will remember that a breeze, a flower, a melody, will awaken emotion so old that he has forgotten what it was, and to what it once belonged; and before he can trace it, it has sunk away into its mysterious repose.

The day after I had been at the bedside of Giuditta I was seated in my study, listless and motionless; I was in that state of profound calm, which seems to render existence itself incompatible with noise. Suddenly, the sounds of a harp reached me, they entwined themselves round my soul, and carried me back to a period of time which appeared long antecedent to my earthly being. A pre-existing sympathy was awakened; I felt a retrospective longing, a hope directed back into the past eternity, as if my essence had once been its companion. It was soon over; my interests in by-gone ages disappeared, and my soul again wandered in vain amid the wastes of time to find out its ancient home.

I approached the window and saw an aged harper; no sooner did he look up and repeat his melody, than the strange emotion revived. But now, Giuditta and the harper lived in the feeling, which was one of time-hallowed peace. I seemed, during the momentary trance, to know the harper well; he appeared associated in my mind with Giuditta. He changed the melody: the new air transported me to later times; it was one that Giuditta had been wont to sing, and it recalled to my memory that she had also sung the first, in search of whose origin I had traversed ages which preceded my own.

These are states of mind which, as it were, hallowed by the antiquity within us, embrace more of the feeling of immortality than those awakened by reason or modern emotion. They are like glimpses caught through the darkness of the dead sea of passion over whose undisturbed surface souls wander after death, and find that peace which before they only knew in day-dreams.

You will think that I am purposely delaying the conclusion of Giuditta's history of her life! It is true. When I saw her again she cried out, "O my saviour, tell me once more that I am thine, and I will die." I sank on my knees by her side, and prayed, and groaned, that the soul of the deluded might be saved. It was in vain that I addressed myself to heaven, her ravings

scattered my orisons—the one distracted the other ; she threw the fragments of her reason at my prayers, which fell heavily on me again to mock my repentance. I seized her hand and shouted, “Giuditta, I am not thy saviour, but thy destroyer !”

The sentence awoke her remaining reason, her screams pierced to the heart of heaven. She rose, and with superhuman eloquence, invoked the justice of the Highest ! You shall, one day, oh Pulci, read that invocation. The delicacy of that female madness was a sight too beautiful to behold ! In a moment she relapsed, the warning voice was forgotten, she smiled benignantly on her murderer ! I was glad. O Tragedy ! how wonderful are thy works, how awful is thy name !

She died in her delusion. The wicked had ceased from troubling, the weary was at rest.

As she lay in death, there was a truly sweet expression on her face. The intense passion which agonized her mortal features, was all gone ; the soul left nothing behind but peace, as if it had learned its heavenly destiny, and had calmed the features on its way to Paradise. There was a smile given to the lip of death, a smile of pardon ! Yes, her soul had detected me !

She is gone ! but the tragical picture which, as the events transpired, was written scene for scene, will enjoy perpetual youth, and is still as fresh as the flowers which grow and flourish on her grave.

## CHAPTER IV.

HAD I been born the wretch who, endowed with genius and virtue, is clad by the Donor of those immortal gifts in rags, and fed on refuse—my eccentricities would have been construed into signals of folly. But I had honour and gold, that by me the insolent world loved rather to be insulted than unobserved. There were times when I was courteous, generous, and cheerful; but these were like the second summers which come to mock the haggard autumn of the new world; and have no sooner raised the spirits of men, than they suddenly vanish, and leave the decay of nature to proceed unchecked. For, with these few exceptions, I was as gloomy at heart as if I had been the natural enemy of joy. Have you ever seen the lion's claw darted at the breast of the gay huntsman? His heart in a moment is laid bare, and you see the emotion of joy tremble and die from terror. So, indeed, was my breast torn by the great passions which I constantly strove to subdue; and such was the certain end of my pleasures. But it was not often that I allowed myself to be conquered by myself. I was like a tyrannic government which plants spies in the heart which nourishes it;—the breast was a prison in which the free-born passions were confined in irons; my conscience I taught the art, and supplied with the instruments of self-destruction. In myself I saw an iron-crowned divinity controlling the boundless empire of Self!

With my own passions thus armed against me, it was a sleepless task to overawe the inward mob, and save my soul from the horrors of civil war: yet I not only effected this, but, what is more, preserved the exterior aspect of repose. I smiled on those I loathed; I blessed with words the men for whose annihilation I would have cursed myself and died. Still, the struggle was not all concealed; and those who surrounded me saw my eccentricity with interest, and bore its offences with feelings of pity. When I perceived this, I walked with them to my father's tomb, and, imitating grief, gave them a silent, convincing, and lying explanation of my conduct. They believed, I triumphed; and on these occasions I conferred new honours on myself, by seeking the mountains or nearest solitudes, and shouting in my own ears, "Tragedy, thou art thy own reward!"

After these passionate outbreaks, to prove to myself how tranquil I had become, how self-complacent,—I have drawn my sword and pointed it at my breast in safety; I have shot it into its scabbard again, with a playful smile. And then I have felt that my army of passions was disciplined, that my spiritual warriors were organized for opportunities to come, that their aggressions would one day extend over kingdoms, and hurl monarchs into the volcanoes which consumed the foundations of their thrones.

"O what power has man! two paupers are strong enough to end the anxieties of a tyrant's head. A thousand cannot make him quail,—but two are enough to end him, and to be the repositories of his last commands! But how many paupers would constitute one Vates? Count the stars of heaven, give to every man a star—the multitude even then shall not eclipse my glory, or shine in the presence of the sun!" Having said thus, I have stretched myself along a loose fragment of mountain, and defying it to move, have whispered to the descending cataract, "Genius was not great enough for Vates, so it is gilded with madness; but this he conceals in caverns deeper than those through which your waters hiss—his power lies in its magic; you may betray him to nature; you may make poison of his words for the plants which you nourish, and the throats which drink you; you may warn the ocean which will engulf you—but you cannot betray him to man! Man shall never know it; concealment is the greatest faculty of my reason, which itself is as sane as the heavens—and therein is the Philosophy of Madness." Having said and done these things, oh Pulci! I have grown as quiet as the funeral of a storm.

It was such outbursts as these which led me to discover that peace is the greatest attribute of the soul. The immortalists, a class which pervades every age, and whose sole aim is to obtain fame in their generation, and to perpetuate it with posterity, are for ever striving together to find some power, greater than any yet perfected, to which to affix their glory; and each, whether by art or nature, desires to be greater than the rest. Deluded by a temporary triumph, the one deems himself the most exalted whose success is in meditation which he calls divine; another, whose rise is founded in the purest sentiments of virtue. These awhile are dominant, and are then eclipsed by the bright talent for satire, or contempt, or disinterested mischief. A new good or a new evil, highly wrought, obscures them all.

Art thou deemed mighty by the philosophers in thy contempt for man? Art thou also deified by the vulgar for thy liberality and thy advocacy of the rights of thy fellow-creatures? The one whispers, the other bawls thy praise! But what sayest thou of thyself? Art thou not as cunning as thou art politic? Dost thou not despise thyself? If not, get thyself soothed by music, and when calm thou wilt feel great for the first time, but thou wilt also feel that thou art but a savage tamed by the simplest arts of those thou affectedst to contemn! Be calm, or posterity will pass sentence on thy defects, for who can look back on the discontented who is mingled already with the dead, and not say, O sight contemptible! he complains among the tombs, he disturbs those with whom he sleeps, with his eternal murmurs!

Then imitate the peaceful;—let God's works be thy model, and his Son's mildness thy assurance;—a mildness more miraculous than the voice which stills the tempest and opens the grave. Let even thy madness be tranquil:—all things are possible with God,—and most things with men!

The career of genius is like that of a comet among the fixed stars of life. It moves in an eccentric orbit through systems; suns cannot arrest it; the wonder of the universe—the terror of worlds. It invents infinite space as it calmly treads the ætherial way, it ascertains the boundaries of creation, its memory is a record of the greatness of nature and the littleness of man.

It is the fate of genius to admire one of its own species, and to think that one greater than itself before its own career is begun. That one must have preceded its own existence, and have been, in at least one power, more perfect. Man must depend on man; some living being must

connect him with the past, must introduce him to the mighty who possess its twilight glory—who occupy its immortal shades. He cannot go there alone—he cannot turn his back on that east in which his sun has risen; and, without its guidance, enter the cities which are illumined only by setting light. With downcast eyes, and modest steps, he must approach the republic of those minds whose government extends over ideal worlds, the walls of whose cities rise before the traveller's eyes, impenetrably dark, because of the blindness of the stranger.

The past is sacred ground; the future is all our own. Most men rest on the past; it is the history of their country, and as patriots they cling to their native soil; but the future is a distant land, to which but few dare emigrate. The past is classic land; the future is a howling wilderness—it is peopled with savage broods—it is bristled with dayless forests. But the sun is even there; it shines longer and over a vaster tract than in the lands where the mighty are reposed.

The Abbate Bernabò was the genius of my idolatry; he it was who connected me with the past, of which his awful intellect constituted the last bright link. His equal I never knew; having known him I sought no other. But who could understand his deep philosophy? He was not vain; he cared not for applause; a smile expressed his despair of just reputation, at least in the age which possessed him—an age which was his sepulchre—his fellow-mortals the dust which was scattered over that melancholy grave. Still, thus buried in life instead of death; thus imbedded in the dark, impenetrable mould of human nature, his intellect struck deeper root, and bore perennial leaves, nor did he wish all his self-acquired knowledge to perish with him, but looked to me as a depository for his secrets, as a hand which would receive them, and pass them on to a successor. His subject was the universe and the mind of man. But at an early age he studied the great lesson of wisdom, which to other men is set as a task by Death, and learned by them at the raw margin of the grave; at an early age he discovered that genius was bestowed as a self-gratification—that its reward was self-applause. In studying the fate of mortals, he was interested only in it as a volume of mirrors which reflected from its pages his own privileges and doom.

It was one fine evening in summer, two hours before twilight, when I found myself on the summit of the hill which bounds the Boboli gardens, with the Abbate, receiving his first philosophical revelation. I know not how the meeting was convened; it was not by appointment nor by chance, but by an impulse so naturally affecting us both, that till this moment I have not thought of examining its source. If the same idea pervades two persons, does it act simultaneously on their volition? However this may be, I cannot recall to mind the circumstances of our meeting, I only recollect that we were deeply engaged in conversation, but I well remember every sentence that the philosopher delivered.

“This is the fittest hour for the expression of high thoughts,” said the philosopher, “nor is this place ill-suited to the task. The calmness of the hour, at this season, is a check to imagination and an encourager to reason; and the vastness of the scene below us, and the fertility on every side, forbids us to express views inconsistent with their powerful truth. When we discuss nature, a leaf is a more formidable antagonist than man; its silent advocacy overawing us more than the most eloquent opposition of human learning. Nothing that I am about to tell you is new to me; no thought that occurs to me at this hour shall I express; I neither use new thoughts nor preserve them; if they are true, they are immortal and enjoy the law of self-preservation;

they unite with the mind, enrich and harmonize it; and when they reappear they are calm; but when used, or forcibly detained in their infancy, they are feeble on the one hand, and little better than things which have been reared in slavery on the other."

To this I replied in the following manner:—

"You know, reverend father, that I am not unknown in the walk that I have chosen, and it gratifies me to be able to declare that, for a long time past, I have ceased to record the thoughts and emotions of the hour. But I have done this by instinct, and not by the more perfect aid of system, as you have done. I have felt as if thought reflected back on the mind, enriched the soil, and I have been afraid of impoverishing the garden by plucking its flowers as fast as they blossomed; but it has been for you to demonstrate to my reason the cause of my actions in this respect. This course has succeeded, for I have found that when I have wished to gather ideas there has been on all subjects a plenteous harvest."

"The truths which I am about to expound," resumed the father, "affect your happiness here, and your welfare hereafter. My philosophy reconciles all things; it teaches injustice to glory in the cause of its evils, it assures the reason that as it exists so it must continue for ever. It proves that the entire universe, in its least and greatest operations, will be eventually revealed to man; it convinces him that he will take a part in all things future, that he has been an actor in all things past." I begged the father to proceed.

"But my mind is too full of the responsibilities, to which fate has subjected it, to place before you, in one view, the system which it has perceived in nature. Moreover, there are certain truths which, in themselves, are palpable to the reason, but which have been deduced from observations too numerous to be recorded. These I doubt not you will follow, but there are men who invite you to an explanation of general phenomena, but who hang on you as a dead weight at the outset, unable to follow to the goal, from ignorance of admitted principles; and they soon forget the end, which they themselves inquired for, in toiling at the means proposed to attain it."

"Give me an example," I replied.

"If, for instance," said Bernabò, "you say to this man, that matter cannot be destroyed; he will express astonishment and doubt. The consumption of the oil which feeds his lamp, to him is the destruction of matter. He cannot trace the ærial elements to the sky, or perceive them falling to the earth to mingle again with its productions: nor can we, by the sense, but we know that these things are; we know that through endless ages, not a single particle is lost. The atom is imperishable; it is the type of immortality."

"All this," I said, "I understand; neither has it been taught me, but was the gift of nature."

"And it is only with such as you," said the Abbate, "that I would converse."

We finished that evening in repeating, in new forms, the ideas which this dialogue contained, and in testing their integrity. And on separating, he begged me not to be convinced by the instances offered by a few phenomena, but to examine them in relation to past and future time, to the heavenly sphere, as well as to the earth; and last of all, to the dust of which my own body was made. I left him, and was sad.

The union of passions, which were almost ungovernable, with a quiet and ever-successful philosophy, did not allow my mind to rest, or my body to be inert. My power had been con-



firmed by practice, and I now handled the magic rod, by which scenes of life and death were conducted, with the grace of an enchanter. I no longer feared the consequences of my deeds, for they were carefully measured to my capacity before they were undertaken. It was worse at first to contemplate, than it afterwards became to execute a plan. This improvement proved beneficial to the cause, for extraneous fears are apt to interfere with the symmetry of tragic emotion; which, however direful, has need of an atmosphere of calm. The more terrific the means we seize on for our inspiration, the more glorious the end attained. The man who would pursue the Tragic, must lay the talisman on his heart, and say, "Feel not for thyself; let thy blood be congealed!" He must learn to consider all the feelings, as the phenomena of a science which he loves; or as specimens which he has to arrange for his ideal museum. Reason should be made the medium of all sympathy, and then even anguish, like the Laocoon, will be so richly grouped, that it cannot fail to excite interest and pleasure. I am convinced that, by practice, we may make ourselves acquainted with all the truths of tragedy, without being painfully affected; but that, on the contrary, our minds may accustom themselves to regard visible affliction with a relish, as much higher than that which we feel in contemplating art, as life is more beautiful than death. For, after all, art is but death acting the mimic. All that is absolutely necessary is to remember what was passion, and to merge sympathy into the reason; the effect will be a truly exquisite conception of the "fine ideal" of human sorrow.

By this time you will have been convinced that my desire has not been only to erect a tragic monument, at which the earth might gaze in wonder. I have ever, with heartfelt sincerity, believed that nothing so forcibly conduces, as tragedy, to produce that revulsion of profound feeling which leads to moral revolution. Exhibit the career of a master-criminal on the stage, when the curtain falls does not the spectator say that he has witnessed the performance of a sermon? The bloody revolution is a warning, and those who read of its horrors are not the men to assist in their repetition. A nation will not a second time raise the suicidal arm. Thus, then, are the spirits of terror effective long after the real has passed away.

Whatever is solemn, has a tragic influence on the mind; even the peaceful contemplation of beautiful objects may charm us into pleasing terror. Often have I watched the twilight of heaven from the Ponte Santa Trinità, and felt my soul absorbed by the scene, as behind the snows of the western Appennine the sun has sunk rapidly away. I have compared the gorgeous ruins of the day to the remains of Tuscan splendour, at the same time that I have conjured up in the circle of evening the spirits of the great. I have seen, or imagined to have seen, the Inferno of Dante acted in the changing heavens, and the warriors of Tasso reposing on their arms around the mighty luminary. Beneath have reclined Petrarch and his Laura, while on the orb itself sat enthroned the fiery Alfieri, dictating thought and passion to a world.

I once, my dear Pulci! as you know, had a sister; her name was Angiolina. Oh! I shudder at the thought that she hath passed away; and tremble for the machinery of human nature, when I remember the strange truth, that I have ceased to lament her, when once she was to me the life of all save myself, the spiritual focus which attracted to itself all that was sweet in creation, and presented me with nature as a sister! For can I be said to lament her loss when, except at distant intervals, and then only for a moment, I am wholly unconscious of her having been?

This pale and beauteous being was married, at the age of fifteen, to my early friend, Orazio.

She was loved by him with an ardour which nothing could extinguish, but which threatened, from its fierceness, to consume itself. He admired her talents, which were those of a Raffaele, subdued to the circumstances of female power. She also sculptured in alabaster, and furnished her boudoir with the vases and graces of her own hand. I passed many hours, every week, at the house of my near relatives, which I had reason to think was by no means agreeable to Orazio. He had not been married a twelvemonth, when he showed a dislike to my society. This did not deter me from repeating my visits to my sister, and as he could neither prevent nor enjoy them, he absented himself from home, and treated my sister with coolness. I have since observed, by repeated experience, during my more intimate acquaintance with the world, that the intrusions of a wife's relations may in time destroy every spark of affection in a husband, who naturally loved her tenderly. Angiolina was too noble a character to suspect the cause of her husband's conduct. While he was at the Casino gambling with wealthy foreigners, she remained at home without a murmur, and with her neglected charms made solitude appear fairy-land.

Except in my strange moods, when the face of man was intolerable to my sight, I entertained a sincere regard for Orazio; and even now that he bore himself with sullenness towards me whenever I encountered him, my love was inextinguishable. For those who have been happy together, who have experienced the tender and pure emotion of friendship, will find that though they may afterwards disagree, and hate with a bitterness which the dagger only can sweeten, they cannot efface the history of their being by forgetting the past; and as the scenes have been written on the memory in characters of pleasure, so when recalled they appear pleasantly again; and while the mind is hating, they reanimate emotions of love, and create a longing after reconciliation. So acts the machinery of the soul! Having been much delighted at the discovery of this law, I determined on a plan of exciting Orazio's former love for my sister and myself. It was a very simple one, and I proceeded to the Casino to put it in execution.

I found Orazio at the dice-table. He was only staking money, but such was his eagerness, that had the universe been his, he would have gambled away the worlds, and these lost, he would have staked his own existence. When the excitement is over, the gamester feels that he has been a fool; but while it lasts, not a voice from heaven could convince him that he should desist, unless that voice promised to make him richer than his united antagonists, and their resources. I knew this, and waited. It so happened that in an hour from the time I entered, he had won so much money as to place three or four coronetted heads in a situation to beg their bread, which such persons are invariably forced to do under the pretext of repayment; and such is the pride of these noble mendicants, that they not unfrequently fix a time for the liquidation of the debt of honour!

I saw that Orazio was pleased, and approached him with the intention of inviting him to my castle in the country. He had not been there since his marriage, and by thus hospitably reminding him of a period when he had loved me, I thought to awaken his old affections with good effect. When he saw me in such apparently good-humour, at the same time that he was well pleased with himself, his mind, by a coincidence not at all strange when analyzed, reverted to the period when I had most served him, and, to my surprise, he himself proposed a visit to the Volterrana, in which we should be accompanied by my sister. I told him that I had come for the purpose of making the same proposal. The matter was arranged, and on the following day we left the town; nothing of importance happening on our journey, except that I met Kunikos,

the sight of whom alone made me shudder, while the grin which accompanied his salutation haunted me till midnight.

I was pleased at this consummation. I had myself been wounded at Orazio's ingratitude, but it cut me to the quick to witness how my sister's bosom suppressed the sob—how the tears fell with scarcely a corresponding expression of sorrow. She was too noble to complain, and the shadows of grief darkened her spirit rather than her face. We had, by tacit consent, refrained from the mention of Orazio's name. I had felt every day more and more disposed to rescue her from her sad position. How beautiful she looked in smile-subdued affliction! It was the finest subject of grief that ever sat to my pen.

I knew that Orazio still adored Angiolina. Had he been visited by misfortune, he would have sought solace in her alone. But, alas! there is no other misfortune than poverty with worldly men; and, as my sister's dowry was secured, he could never feel its gripe. Strange world! he ranked his wife among the statues of his palace; but she was his only true happiness; it was therefore natural that he should forsake her.

During our retreat it happened that the Duca di Savatelli, a nobleman who occupied a neighbouring villa, issued invitations for a splendid ball. I was pleased at this. The duke was connected with both our houses, and under his kind auspices the early friendship between Orazio and myself had been formed. The circumstance seemed providential, inasfar as it accorded with my philosophical theory of reconciliation. Our party was among the first guests who arrived. Many a wife came alone; her carriage, horses, domestics, formed a glittering equipage, but only one sat within it. Many, on its arrival, were eager to do homage, but the one on whom the affections dwelt was not present; his part was performed by the stranger.

Orazio had been moody and pensive during his stay in the country, and had been daily to Volterra, on some secret business. That night, however, he was more open and cheerful in his manner than usual, and looked the man of more joys than sorrows. I felt myself to be a gloomy misanthrope, as I looked on his sparkling countenance, and ashamed of my own expression, I forced my features into brightness, though only to mock my nature, for there was no life in my smile, and the shadows of my brow were lengthened, as when the setting sun gilds the ruins of former grandeur, it only adds solemnity to their gloom. But the effort did not last long, and my visage relaxed into its more easy tone of sadness—an expression natural to me as often as I saw others happy, not from envy, but owing to the total absence of sympathy with the pleasures of men.

I found a seat by Orazio, and we were soon joined in conversation. We reviewed the days of our youth, our wanderings, and the burning attachments of boyish hours. We broke open the volume of our history, and reperusing it, lived over again. I was the speaker; he was painfully moved at the recollection; he looked at his wife; she was smiling at him—he wept.

Orazio rose, and made a sign to his wife to retire. I did not accompany them, for I had seen penitence, which my absence might improve into a revival of affection. I was charmed, and I entered into conversation with every one I encountered; the expression of their features suggested the subject, for the lightest, and therefore the most pleasing thoughts with the gay, are always on the face—the surface of the mind! As the music continued to flow, the spirit of dance was more diffused, the love notes of the sexes grew louder, and when words had said all that they dared express, the eyes took up the theme, and glance told to glance, even more than the lips, by their kissing vagaries, could have expressed. I laughed, and thought of Kunikos.

And now, the cotillion ended, there was a general confusion, a breaking-up, a dispersion. Smiling nods were seen from shawl-covered heads; sighing and burning farewells were heard from maidens, unwillingly dragged along at the arms of unfeeling brothers, and fascinating looks distinguished solitary old women, who were waiting to hear their carriages announced.

I descended the staircase to the hall, where I remained until the visitors had left, and employed myself in selecting a few new ideas from the frescoes, to amuse me on my way home. I was attracted by a representation of Diplomacy, in which the one figure is glorying in the successful result of his well-laid schemes; while the other, over whom his eloquence has triumphed, having formed beforehand a plot for the destruction of his opponent, cedes the point at issue, and beckons to the ministers of the Inquisition, who stealthily surround the victor. This beautiful drawing alarmed and excited my reason, but while meditating its application, my carriage drove up.

I entered immediately; but to my surprise, a corner of my vehicle was occupied by another—by a ruffianly-looking fellow, whose exterior was like a column in an armoury, so thickly arranged were his offensive weapons. I did not perceive him until I was seated, and the door had closed; and, as I demanded his business, the carriage was in rapid motion.

I turned towards him in silence, and kept my eyes fixed on his person, while, with my left hand, I dropped the carriage window and gave the alarm. "It is useless to resist," said the ruffian, while my servant, descending, demanded the cause of my uneasiness. Before I could again speak, the vehicle was surrounded by an armed police, which I welcomed to my rescue, and pointed to the intruder, with whom I directly commenced a struggle. "Hold, if you value your life," cried the foremost of the band; "he is our leader, and has a warrant from the secretary of the good government to take you under custody to Volterra." My armed companion produced his warrant, which I saw was a legal instrument, and obtained my promise that I would allow myself to be driven to the citadel. I began to consider for what offence I was apprehended, but there was something on my mind of far less importance which effectually checked my reflection. It was whether my servants had admitted my companion into the carriage. I asked the question of my unwelcome neighbour, who suddenly was polite and respectful; he assured me that he had been seated there two hours before the horses were led out to the carriage, and, at the risk of detection, he had chosen this as the most private manner of effecting my arrest. Though I did not believe all he said, I was sufficiently satisfied to collect my thoughts. I went over the whole history of my life backwards, to discover in what I had offended against the laws; and whenever I arrived at any event in which I had been engaged with Orazio, I paused. I then retraced the events of my life from my earliest memory to the hour of my arrest. I thought of the fresco—I there stumbled on myself, Orazio, and the police.

"God of my ancient birth!" I exclaimed; "Orazio Aldobrandini is my accuser!"

"He is," said the physical force at my right, "but you must pay for the information as well as keep it a secret. However, you can settle all at once, as perhaps you require some further knowledge; I live principally by giving instruction of this kind, and when any one betrays me, I deny, and introduce his body, the first opportunity I have, to the Society of Ancient Skeletons, which never publishes its debates."

I did not encourage the sbirro to make any further communications from motives which will

be understood only by a few. I had heard much said, and seen much written on the emotions consequent on solitary confinement, and was desirous of experiencing them in their purest form, which, as it appeared to me, could be acquired only from ignorance of the cause and duration of the sentence of imprisonment. We soon arrived at the confines of the citadel, and having alighted and imposed certain injunctions on my servants, I signified my willingness to proceed. We ascended to the citadel, traversed a court, and at the farther end crossed a drawbridge to the tower, which we entered through a door-way sunk into its deep stone walls. We then descended a few paces into a cell six feet by eight in size, which was furnished with a seat and a bed of straw. Here I was placed by my conductor ; as he bid me farewell, I desired him not to forsake me, and gave him gold ; this he eagerly took, which I construed into a favourable omen. I had not felt the full power of the law until I heard the lock turned on my dungeon door ; but then I felt separated from the universe. I breathed with difficulty, I pressed the palms of my delicate hands against the rough and damp stone walls, as if to move them from between me and the heavens ; but only to feel that I was indeed a prisoner. My first emotion was the most bitter anguish ; I uttered a plaintive cry, and sobbed, but with no disposition to shed tears. I shook my limbs with impatience, I clasped my hands and looked upwards into the darkness. I beat my head, but with tenderness ; I seized my hair, but with the gentleness of one who had no friend. I sank into my seat, but instantly left it ; I threw myself on the straw, but immediately sprang to my feet. I tried to climb the wall to an aperture through which a ray of moonlight passed ; but the cold chill which struck on my hand, and the sliding of my foot from the wall as I tried to fix it, deterred me. I went to the door, and attempted the lock with my finger, but all was vain ; I was a prisoner—the law was greater than I. All these movements I performed again and again, and like a person who is cold and hungry, I howled through misery.

When I had re-collected my senses, I had a sensation which I had never before experienced ; I felt as if there was no future. I could not anticipate the next moment ; when it came I knew it, but not before. I could not form any plan of conduct, or even anticipate a visit from the gaoler. I was not hungry, but I conceived a horror of starvation. The morrow appeared to me to be on the other side of the grave.

When I was first taken into custody, and when I ascertained that Orazio was my accuser, I subdued my sentiments of defiance and revenge, until I should find myself alone, when I considered that their accumulation would be fearful ; but instead of multiplying they had vanished ; I could have embraced my foes ! I again placed myself on my bed of straw, drew my cloak over my head, and invited slumber. There is a moral connexion between sleep and the apparent absence of the future ; I thought that I would continue in a state of torpor for the rest of my life, and forget my forlorn state of being. As I lay I thought hurriedly over the past ; but no event attracted me, nothing seemed important ; the loss of liberty was the loss of all interest in what had been, or had yet to be.

I slept ; what were my dreams ?

I first saw on old Etruscan sarcophagus, on which the arch of Hercules was sculptured. I then saw the real arch with a funeral procession moving through it. I then thought that various mutilated sculptures, and mosaics of great colour and richness covered the floor of my dungeon ; others fell in on them from the roof with a terrible crash. I soon appeared buried in the ruins

of the arts. I moved my arms forward as if in sympathy, when an old man appeared by my side holding an intense light. He pointed to a chain, which was rivetted to the wall, and again to the floor which was worked into two hollows by the feet of some wretched prisoner.

"I am the Genius of the prison," said the old man, "there I sat for seventeen years, and died. My crime was the love of glory; I deified the arts and forgot the Pope's vice-divinity. Come with me, and I will show you such things as you can never behold again."

I arose and followed the Genius. He had opened the door with a key which he drew from his bosom, and led the way up a narrow staircase. As I placed my right foot on the first step, I met my mother; she mildly shook her head and disappeared behind me. I made a second effort to ascend, when I was checked by the appearance of my father; he glared his eyes on me and vanished. I made a third essay to mount, when Maria hurried by me with her brother at her heels, hobbling after her on splendid crutches. I paused for breath and again thought of advancing, when Giuditta, winged as an angel, floated by on the air. I now heard the voice of the Genius above reproaching me for my delay; and was about to obey his call, when the same procession descended in the same order, but in more rapid succession, and disappeared as before, each bearing a torch. And now a scene ensued which is indescribable. The figures rushed down with the rapidity of a waterfall, no sooner vanishing below than reappearing above, and again descending, but now chased by bloodhounds which leaped the flight of stairs like cataracts, and howled as if from suffering and alarm, while the slamming of doors shook the tower to its foundation. You may conceive what I felt from the feelings you have experienced during my description of this vision, making allowances, however, for the much greater power of reality than of sympathy. I sank exhausted on the ground. Melancholy I sat for some moments, my head reposing on my hand, with my back turned on the infernal scene, the noises of which, gradually lost in distance, were hushed. When I raised my eyes, the Genius stood before me at the summit of a broad staircase of great architectural beauty, and having, on each side of every step, a large alabaster figure.

"You have lost your way," said my venerable guide, "arise and ascend without further loss of time, for the night changes."

I did as I was commanded, and no sooner raised myself, than I seemed wafted along without an effort. The corridor above opened on a platform outside the tower, where I found myself standing with the Genius at my right side. Such a night as I then beheld, I am sure no mortal has ever gazed on. All the luminaries above burned in large distinctness, and the blue sky appeared thrown over them as a precious robe. Below, on all sides, nature slumbered as in refreshing sleep, and seemed entranced in a dream of glorious resurrection from the past revolutions of her globe.

"And now," said the Genius, "I will display to you, in the forms of reality, what the Buonarotti, Raffaelli, Danti, and Alfieri of fine art have only conceived in thought. I will show you the cartoons and models which were designed by immortal natures before the world was created, and from which its scenes and ornaments were executed. Turn, and behold this design."

I looked round and saw a gigantic work which, from the perfect interposition of light and shadow, had the effect of a solid model. It was an Alpine wilderness, of which solid ice-crags, snow surfaces, and rushing waters occupied the summits, and calm waters the depths. This

picture disappeared and I beheld the Appennine-girt Italia with her feet in the ocean. I saw neither papal, royal, nor ducal thrones; neither cardinals, nor priests; neither duomi nor capelle; neither princes nor lazaroni;—but a territory of noble races, the city covered with palaces, the country with villas, and beautified by the waving corn-field, the pendant vine, and the dark-grey olive. Such was the land.

The second scene passed away, and figures stood before me which might be taken for the originals of those serene statues of ancient Hellas, which from time past have delighted the chaste vision of man. Much more I saw, but which I cannot realize; be therefore satisfied with the idea which is not more agreeable perhaps than it is improving.

“All that I have looked on,” said I, “is grand and beautiful; it is emblematic of gladness, and fit only to please permanently the perfect and the immortal.”

“After those ancient models,” replied the Genius, “the perfect and the immortal were created: for man and nature were both. But things have so changed, that it is difficult now for the artist to conceive, or man to enjoy their beauty. The one has to labour through a severe process in refining nature, the other in refining himself. You have heard of the labours of Hercules; they were great: but those of the fine ideal are far greater.”

I sank at the feet of the Genius, and embraced his knees, exclaiming, “Blessed is he who hath thus feasted my reason with divine truth!”

The Genius smiled, and said, “Follow, and I will show thee the labours of a rival school, with which thou wilt not be less delighted.”

We again stood on the corridor, when the great staircase gaped at its centre, and in an instant the alabaster images stood at twice the distance from each other, and glowed as if illumined by flame.

“And now comes the trial of thy courage,” said the Genius; “look over the margin of this corridor, and tell me if thou art brave enough to encounter the element which rages beneath us.”

I advanced and gazed on a sea as wide as that which spreads before the eye of him who stands on the Tuscan shore and sees no coast on the other side. But the waves were as boisterous as if pregnant with storms, which contended together for primogeniture and the inheritance of tyranny over nature’s calm,—and a deeper hue tinged those waves than when in summer the sun sets like a globe of fire. It was a sea of flame, and my temples were scorched while I looked upon its raging billows. I hastily receded, and cried out, “O Genius! my path has been heretofore that of danger, and now you would lead me to inevitable destruction.”

“Thy fears are natural,” he answered; “but if thou canst place thy faith in me, thou wilt not regret it in the end.”

He said this with such complacency that I was disposed to place myself in his power, and accordingly I expressed my willingness to do all that he proposed. But my temerity, inexplicable on common principles, will appear less astonishing when I remind you that, when danger attends us in our dreams, a mute assurance that it is but a dream, emboldens the mind to advance, without deteriorating from the apparent reality of the vision. The severed stairs now dipped into the flood, and we descended and walked the deep. The flames did not attack us; they were harmless—they had lost their power! But ere we had advanced many steps, my courage failed, and I implored the Genius to stretch forth his hand and save me, for I was fast sinking. He took me by my garment and commanded me to be calm, and we advanced till land receded from our view.

It appeared to me that we had been journeying for the space of many days, and yet we saw no friendly shore. The Genius was silent all the time; and as I walked by his side, no other idea occupied my mind than that of gliding motion over a charmed scene. We at last reached a rocky eminence, and pausing, leaned against it for repose. I rested my head on both my hands and looked down, when my eyes were attracted by beautiful figures in whitest marble, which lay like the remains of palaces or temples of former years. When the Genius saw me thus engaged, he smiled, and said, "Palaces may be ruined, temples may be destroyed, but the works of genius are never lost. Man may neglect or spurn them, but God is their protector. All that has been done is saved!"

As he ceased, I saw a fleet approaching the rock where we sat; ship after ship arrived, was dashed against it and wrecked. The treasures which they contained were works of art, and these sank with the vessels which wafted them to that remorseless reef.

"These are the dangers which the great have to encounter; their works are lost in the same hour that they are completed;" and saying this, the Genius waved his arm, and the flood receded. Before us now extended a vast plain, on which the images we had discovered, and those which had been wrecked at our feet, were arranged in the most perfect order. On looking with astonishment and delight on the various rows of groups and figures, I observed that each work expressed some dominant passion of the soul. Here were the Agonies grouped together in the folds of serpents—there the Medusan Terrors. Now the dying gladiator spent eternity in expiring, and now the saint repented, and prayed, and in that act filled a thousand years of time; for though the artist can only seize the moment, he makes it last for ever. I saw nothing that personated repose, and when I had exhausted myself in examining the numberless objects around, I turned to the Genius and besought him to introduce to my notice the more pleasing impersonations of tranquillity.

"Those," he said, "we have left; they belong to higher art; they are the models of the Scuolo del Paradiso. Repose is loved only by the good, the great, the few, and therefore it is that the Scuolo del Inferno prospers best. In this school, ambition struggles towards some unattainable end; the passions are in a state of evolution; they are aiming at some object which they long for, whether directed by fear or courage, hope or despair, and that object is repose; but as they seek it by means of excitement they only find it in death.

"Learn, then, that perfect art consists in total exemption from passion. This condition leaves to the artist, beauty and peace, with all the passions of man, which elsewhere occupy hundreds of models, harmoniously suppressed in a single form;—but not omitted—for human nature implies the existence of passion. But this lesson would be thrown away on one who was in a transition state of feeling; while to one whose being was highly harmonized, it would be unnecessary, for he would already possess within himself the great balance of repose."

The Genius vanished, I arose and again recognised my dungeon.

"If I ever become a tyrant," I exclaimed, "I shall know the punishment of a prison! The monarch who executes, the judge who pronounces the sentence, ought first to suffer himself, that he might know to what it is that he condemns. A day is worse to the sufferer than a year appears to the administrator of the laws. O that mercy had been discovered before the power of monarchs came of age; it would then have been taught to the heirs of mock-omnipotence in their youth, and almost have enjoyed the earnestness of religion. And is it then true,"



continued I, "that the most wretched are afflicted with the brightest dreams, and that glorious visions are bounded on either side by woe!"

"This citadel which now compresses my freedom within its narrow bounds was built by the founders of my house! I inherit its severities; they destined me to inherit its strength. I thank them not that I was born to bear their name; I pray not for descendants; the name of progenitor has fewer charms for me than that of destroyer!"

The gleam of light which penetrated my dungeon had changed its character; it was more vivid, and announced the dawn. My sight no longer then, but my reason, was to decide on the presence of night and day! I kissed a dagger which I drew from my breast, and cursed the day that gave me birth.

A keeper withdrew the bars of my prison door, and entered with provisions; I neither regarded nor addressed him, but when he retired I seemed to take a new lease of my dungeon. I thought of arranging my plans and ideas; but all that was written within me seemed hieroglyphical, and impossible to be deciphered. I was alarmed to find past history closed, the present, as it were, dying, the future masked like a monk behind the cowl. I was able to repeat my dream but once, and it was exhausted; I then dwelt on the entrance of the keeper, and heard the locks and bars for hours; and when I eat my bread and drank my water, I shed the first tears that for years had relieved me. It was thus that days passed away in inactivity, and nights in dream. Every morning appeared to be the anniversary of some marked affliction, and Sunday seemed the name of every morrow! My uneasiness increased from hour to hour, and was aggravated by the uncertainty in which the period of my confinement was involved; for I would willingly have exchanged my doubt on this subject for a certainty of even twenty years. One morning as I was dwelling on the thought, my old acquaintance, the sbirro, entered my dungeon, and as the lock was turned on the door after him, I conjectured that he had something to communicate. I looked earnestly in his face—I looked closer; he smiled, and in a transport I exclaimed, "It is La Bestia!"

This man was the most daring bravo of the Volterrana, and as his exploits had been principally performed near the coast, and in the neighbourhood of my domain, I was well acquainted with him and his character; indeed he had received presents of me, from time to time, by way of purchase-money for his goodwill. He had entered the police, for a time, as he told me, for private purposes, but in his new capacity he saw no opportunity of assisting me in my escape. He informed me that sacrilege and other crimes were laid to my charge, and that it would be at least four months before I should be conducted to trial. On hearing this intelligence, I was in the deepest despair; the certainty now seemed worse than the previous ignorance of my real situation; I felt that I should be driven to madness by detention during so long a period.

"La Bestia," I cried, "I must make my escape this day!"

The bravo smiled at my enthusiasm, and told me that, in the first place, my gaoler was guarded by a sentinel outside, whose post was never vacant; that before reaching the drawbridge I should have to encounter a dozen guards; that the governor's window overlooked the bridge, and lastly, that a garrison was stationed in the court outside the citadel.

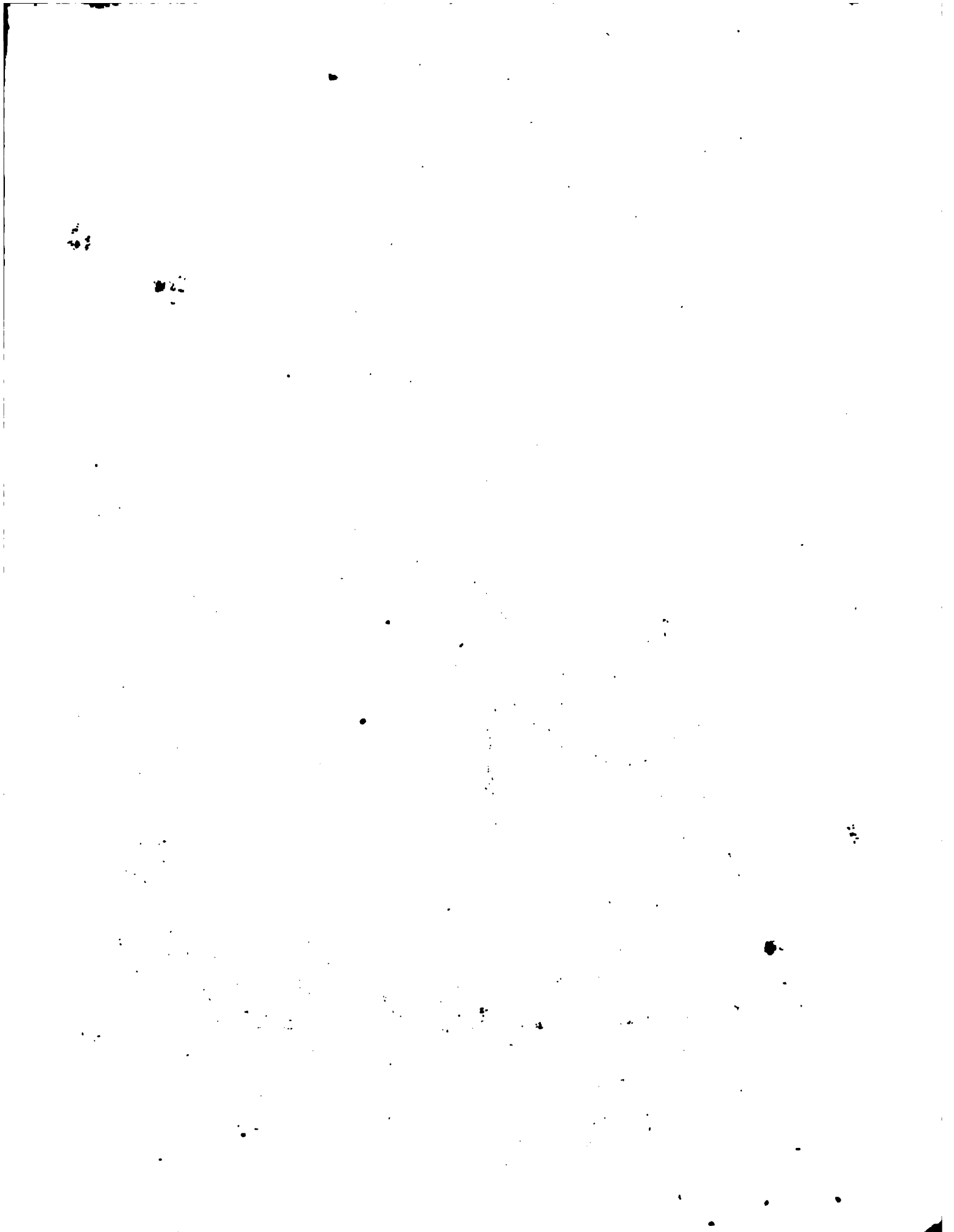
I mused for several minutes on the possibility of overcoming these extraordinary difficulties, and being fertile in expedients, a scheme at length took possession of my imagination. My first inquiry was, whether the gaoler was corruptible? To this La Bestia replied in the affirmative, but declared that he saw no immediate advantage derivable from tampering with one possessed of such limited power.





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"When he returns, present him with a sum of money, and desire him by some means to break the windows which overlook the drawbridge, and under pretence that they cannot be repaired until the following day, let him paste paper over them, so as entirely to shut out the view."

"That part of the scheme is easily accomplished," said La Bestia.

"In the next place, propose to him, that, when he brings me food, he shall unbar my door, and then dashing the water-jug on the ground, raise an outcry, and throw himself down in a fit at the further end of the passage; the sentinel will then hasten to his assistance, and while struggling to hold him, I will creep from the dungeon and ascend the steps."

"If the latter part of the scheme is as good as the former," said La Bestia, "success is near at hand; but how are you to pass the dozen guards in the corridor?"

"When you have settled all things with the gaoler," I continued, "go into Volterra, and purchase a book there sold secretly, which is filled with immoral pictures. Take this yourself to the window of the corridor, and draw the guards into conversation, and entertain them with the drawings, with your backs turned to the door."

La Bestia laughed with delight, and assented.

"But, first of all," said I, "bring me the garments of a monk, that, while passing through the garrison, I may deceive any stragglers who may observe me, by conferring on them my blessing."

"Signor!" exclaimed La Bestia, "you are the only man whose sagacity I have yet found superior to my own: all shall be accomplished to-morrow: till then we cannot meet again."

Once more left alone, I thought over my plan, and from frequently performing it in my mind, it appeared simpler, and more simple, till at last I felt that I knew my part so well that success was sure to attend me. At an early hour next morning La Bestia was once more in my presence. Under his cloak he brought the garb I had required. I was soon dressed in my religious habit, La Bestia having informed me that every thing had succeeded up to the present moment. He informed me that he had already given the guards a glimpse of the volume, and had promised, to their great delight, to return and discuss it with them in half an hour. He added, that his return to the corridor would be a signal to the gaoler to commence his part; and that, if I reached the gates of the court, I should find a carriage round the corner of the walls ready to convey me to Florence.

I embraced the robber, and promised him a handsome reward as soon as the authorities were set at rest.

I watched every minute of the half hour on my watch, the hand of which crept so slowly that I could have dashed the toy to atoms. La Bestia further told me that the gaoler had already practised his fit in the governor's room, and smashed the windows in the struggle; but that shortly recovering from the paroxysm, and appearing as well as before, he was deemed capable of continuing, at all events for the present, in the discharge of his functions. The very sentinel who superintended him had been called in by the governor to prevent his inflicting any injury on himself.

La Bestia left me; the lock turned on my door again; it sounded like mockery; I for the first time doubted the favourable accomplishment of my project. The lock retreated again, the jug was broken, the gaoler howled and bellowed, the sentinel rushed down the steps. I

gradually opened the door, it creaked on its hinges, I was lost! The howl continued; I peeped and saw the back of the sentinel; the gaoler had brought him to the ground. I ascended the steps; a female passed me as I reached the corridor. I held up my finger to command silence, stretched my arms over her in blessing; she sank on her knees; I pointed for her to advance; she obeyed. I entered the corridor. Shouts of laughter smote my ears; the soldiers, one and all, were eagerly pressing forward at the window, and looking over each others' backs at the lewd representations. I crossed the bridge, and though it rained in torrents, I majestically advanced through the court-yard. By the time I had reached the centre, I saw that I was observed by two or three soldiers, who were engaged in polishing their arms. I thought it prudent to stand still and make a sign to them to advance, which they obeyed. I raised my arms, and while they bent before me, I cursed them in an extemporaneous parody of a Latin prayer, delivered in a solemn tone; they felt themselves blessed! I then told them that their offences were forgiven, and besought them to sin no more. I reached the gates of the court, and traversed the road in the direction indicated by my deliverer, with no interruption beyond that of meeting, as I turned the corner, a beggar-boy, who ran through the storm, and began to cry bitterly when he saw me approaching. "Is this misery," said I, "or is it only hypocrisy? Alas, if the latter, his plight is yet worse, for how wretched must he indeed be if compelled by want to thus exaggerate his distresses! And when I look at myself in this garb, am I not the more degraded hypocrite of the two?" I gave him more quattrini than his grief, in his own opinion, was worth, for on receiving them he laughed with joy; and while an unexpected burst of sunshine fell on us both from above and dispersed the shower, I entered the vehicle which awaited me, and proceeded at a rapid pace towards Florence.

## CHAPTER V.

MY respect for the law, which had so recently filled me with terror, diminished in proportion to the rapidity with which I fled from the scene of my confinement. Its powers had overawed me only to increase the confidence which I now acquired in my own skill. I was too strong for human governments; I might, without fear, offend again. Still my mind was troubled as if there were still something to be done, and I examined the inward emotion which disturbed my peace. It was a feeling of gratitude for my escape: this made me unhappy. But to whom was I indebted?—to La Bestia? I had paid him. To myself? I was repaid. Such gratitude was too impure to be efficacious; how then could I disburden my mind? By thanksgiving to the Ruler of the world! I offered a prayer for the acceptance of my praise to the Giver of all good, and was once more at peace with myself.

Having reached a sequestered track, at about a league's distance from Volterra, I heard the loud sounds of a horse's hoofs behind me clattering over the rocky road; I looked out and saw by the gestures of the rider that he was in pursuit of me. I urged the driver on, and stripped off my disguise. The carriage steadily kept its advantage over the horseman for some time, at length its pace slackened and I was overtaken. The rider passed the carriage for a few paces, and then turned round and commanded the driver to stop. It was La Bestia.

"Your flight is already discovered," said the brigand; "lose not a moment in following me."

I alighted, and when La Bestia had given his directions, which I cared not to overhear, to the driver, I followed him through the windings of the hills for some time, and over paths which were unknown, even to the natives of those wild regions.

We arrived at the base of a rocky eminence, whose proportions awakened the remembrance of things which are the most unsightly of Nature's works. The fabled monsters of ancient fancy, the horrible deformities of humanity, might here have been born, and have died; for the rocks seemed shaped and shattered by the skill and deeds of intelligences, fashioned, reared, and blighted by creative hell. Fragments, whose harsh surfaces owned correspondence only with the rugged gaps of the mountain, paved the ground and maddened the calm stream, which the instant it touched them fell over their crags in foam. There cavern lay within cavern, and as we entered the bosom of the earth, I saw traces of the first architectural labours of Gothic Time. There was the deep-arched roof, the unshapely column and its chaotic decorations. The flaring torch illumined archways which dwindled into interminable obscurity, while it shed around a red infernal light. Arrived at the mouth of a nether cavern, we descended by a ladder, the number of whose steps I counted, until the giddy descent bewildered my memory; and in my amazement, and dark



delight, I was forced to concentrate my faculties in the task of self-preservation. The torch-light only reached my hands as I grasped the perilous steps; my feet were in doubt, my hair stood erect, and I could not resist giving utterance to a yell, that the expression of my soul might convey sympathy to the subterranean world; and that yell was responded to by deeper yells. Echo seemed to multiply at will her rock-chained demons. La Bestia descended before me, and on reaching the floor of this new cave, he lighted up a multitude of torches, and I saw myself safe within a circular cave, covered with a rich Persian carpet, and strewed with heterogeneous implements. This dreary chamber communicated with open caverns, many of which had seldom been explored but by wild beasts, which, in former times, had probably known every secret entrance to this scene of horrors. There lay the bones of departed monsters, whose race was extinct, mingled with the elephantine tusk, the antlers of the once swift stag, the ribs and bony columns of the bear. And the great lizard, which, without quitting the water's bank, once snapped with its mighty jaws the tops of the arborescent fern, and uppermost branches of the palm, had been left there by rivers which no longer had a bed to flow on. But these creatures had now been destroyed for ages; life had changed its forms; and these graves, buried in long silence, had at last echoed only to the bandit's mirth and malediction. Evil only had there taken refuge from good; the crucifix had not been planted within that rock, the voice of praise had never reached the Creator from those caverns of death and desolation; but the reiterated curse had swept the roofs and walls, and at last unharshly paused on the ear of the Destroyer.

The floor of the den was ornamented with the instruments of the bandit's art. Muskets, swords, and stiletos, formed a not inharmonious or inelegant group. Many of them were stained with blood, which had flowed from human breasts, and became the sole memento of a hapless doom; while the victim, cast among the antiques of brute mortality, had mouldered upon their pile in unchristian burial. Barrels of gunpowder served as seats, and these were covered with the skins of goats which had been hurled by the robbers from above for destruction, and for food. Wine flasks formed a merry row at another part, and reflected a purple beam on others which held the oil of the olive. Corn, grapes, and figs were elsewhere piled together; besides which, numerous dresses, caskets, and various articles of refinement, were carelessly scattered a cross open trunks, or littered over the carpet.

I had not been long in my new abode when my attention was diverted from the examination of its marvels by the report and long-resounding echoes of a musket. Startled by the noise, I turned to La Bestia, who was standing with his right arm introduced partly into the open cavern, and holding a pistol, the trigger of which he drew as I gazed. A reverberating peal acknowledged the first signal, which was only that of the approach of a number of the band, and in an instant something fell heavily at my feet. It was a fine kid, which had ceased to breathe before reaching the bottom of the abyss into which it had been thrown. Soon came fluttering from above a host of fowl, which dropped frightened and exhausted. I looked towards the aperture above, and while my eye was attracted by some fine birds which fluttered round the walls, I saw figure after figure descending the ladder, and shortly we were surrounded by several men in the dresses of Tuscan peasants. Without regarding me with particular attention, the foremost of the new visitors began to boast the success of the morning's sport, at the same time that he looked carelessly around on his spoils. The game which hovered above, he said, was netted at no great distance, and the other plunder had been abstracted from a neighbouring farm.

La Bestia was pleased, and turned towards me to show his satisfaction. "To-day," he said, "we will spend only in feasting and mirth. Immediately then prepare a banquet, and when all is ready, I shall introduce you to an illustrious stranger, who, for the present, has become my guest. But stay, we will add three or four of the pheasants to the feast;" saying which he raised his piece and ordering the others to do the same, the birds obeyed the fatal summons of their enemies. In a short time the floor was cleared; one dragged away the kid, another collected the birds, a third and fourth drove the fowls into an adjoining cavern; the rest selecting the most splendid ornaments and dresses, quickly disappeared, leaving me alone in the principal cave.

I felt no fear in the presence of these men; my curiosity to know something of their habits of thought, and a remote but not less urgent sympathy with their rough actions, precluded all alarm. Nor had I time to think either of myself or my situation, for the crackling of timber and blazing of fire; the skinning and roasting of the kid; the preparation of the poultry, and the plucking of the game; and finally, the elaborate toilet of the robbers, all of which I saw, amused and delighted me; and although not elevated, there was something new and racy in these pursuits, which exhilarated and pleased, more especially after quitting a prison; for indeed the present scene seemed no inappropriate transition from the slavery and darkness of my late condition, to the perfect recovery of freedom.

At length the feast was arranged on the floor, which was spread over with fine linen, and covered with a profusion of glass, silver, gold, and porcelain. Four Tuscan lamps lighted up the repast, while the torches continued to glare in the distance. The viands were as hot as fire could make them; the wine was as bright as the eyes of the party, and the goblets were as deep as was the heart of the quaffing robber. La Bestia presented his band to me with ceremonious form, which was not a little imposing; for many, like himself, were attired in Asiatic costume; and, like Arabs, we seated ourselves on the ground.

After the scanty fare of my prison I was not merely ravenous: I was insatiate. I tore the delicious flesh from the ribs of the kid, and performed more than my part in denuding the wings of the game. We poured the Lagrime, the Chianti, the Monte Pulciano, in streams as high as the draught was deep, and my favourite beverage, the common wine of Florence, filled my veins, and strengthened my limbs, without disordering the clearness of my vision. I sat on the right hand of La Bestia; on his left was a man whose breast was covered with decorations, and I observed that many of the company wore orders which were current in lawful society. I remarked to the chief that some of his companions appeared to be distinguished favourites of the Roman court,—that among many others the Order of the Holy Ghost was the least uncommon. To this La Bestia replied, that his troop recognised no other court than that at which I was a guest; although he himself did not scruple to adopt the usages of Popes, inasmuch as all orders which he and his companions captured (whether from cardinal or prince), he conferred on the most meritorious of his subjects, that is, on whoever distinguished himself the most for cunning, or undetected crime. Really there was something sublime in the disorder of these men's thoughts, and in the careless satire of their deeds.

The repast was followed by music, song, and play, interspersed with deep draughts of wine and ecstatic laughter. One of the robbers seized a lute, once the solace of a fair captive, and sang in plaintive air the faithless love of one whom he had left among the lawful haunts of men.

Another drew forth a dice-box, and was ere long surrounded by piles of gold, and engaged with those who desired to acquire riches without trouble, or other risk than that of merely losing money. Others in truly Asiatic ease pressed the fragrant weed into richly carved or painted bowls, and from the small bright furnace drew through amber the spirit-calming vapour, the forms of which they watched as it rose until they mingled with the ideal and were gone. And then they spoke only of their own courage, and smiled in praise of each others' deeds. Meanwhile, continuing by La Bestia's side, I conversed with that chief on his impulses and creed, and thought him, while he flattered or excused himself, a hero who deserved a kingdom, but was only rewarded with a command in the war of plunder against his kind. The love of life is the strongest instinct: in this man I saw that life almost hourly exposed in mere pursuit of food, but exposed so boldly that the act secured him every luxury of existence. In him I saw that the greatest man is he who perpetually faces death unawed, and without being incited by the love of fame. There he lived in caverns, beloved by the daring and atheistic, and respected by those who offered rewards and honours for his head. But La Bestia made those his dupes who sought to be his executioners. This man possessed as much philosophy as was suited to his condition, but it tended to harmonize rather than subdue the savage romance of his life. He saw analogies between these dreary haunts and the nature of his deeds, inasmuch as both were dedicated to destruction. The former he contemplated as a wilderness varied only with changeful ruin, but the source of streams which afar off nourished valleys of corn, olives, and vines; while the brigand's deeds he deemed best calculated to keep alive those feelings of civilized man, which are sometimes invoked to resist the aggressions of the tyrant. For the dagger even in peaceful states must sometimes fathom the despot's heart, and disappoint him and his ministering saints of old age, and its easy transit to eternity.

I began to enjoy the society of these outlaws, and to enter into their pleasures. I conversed with them all, and from each learned something new of human nature. Among them I found men in whose veins the blood of the Colonna, the Capponi, the Strozzi, the Corsini, flowed; but they were prouder of themselves than of their ancestry, and thought new dynasties superior to old. Antiquity they deemed extinguished for ever, like the races amongst whose bones they dwelt. A new age existed which replaced the old. And what power or wealth now existing can ever become ancient? Antiquity is lost; its traces are in ruin. Its charms are inimitable, whether in the dimness of architecture, the gloom of sculpture, or the fable of descent. Who would not be the founder of his race? If the light of heroes shines through the darkness of ages, how bright was it not when present? Then prefer the glory of the living to the tombs; deify one another—the ancients deified themselves!

Among the piles of gold which the gamblers contended for I saw a number of antique coins. Now the heads of the Cæsars changed owners; Augustus was lost, or Nero was won. I drew my purse and staked a few francesconi, stamped with the Ducal head of Tuscany, and I gained with them the effigies of emperors. I increased my play and continued to gain. What I could not win I bought, and my pockets were soon filled with the money of Romans. I purchased also of these men human skulls which I saw under the bony paws of antediluvian remains, and the mammoth on your left was brought to this chamber from the caverns I have described.

The name of the robber who wore the order of the Holy Ghost was Lorenzo; and he

who presided at the dice was called Gallo. Another, of whom I shall presently have occasion to speak, was named Iago, and was a native of Spain.

While the brigands were thus amused, La Bestia resumed his dress of office, and having informed me that he should shortly return, ascended the ladder of the cavern. By this time symptoms of drowsiness were manifested by several of the party, and each in his turn was overtaken by sleep on the spot of his past revelry, until all save myself were in slumber. The lights still glared around me, and for a long time prevented my vision from retiring within itself, though my frame was not insensible to the somniferous spell which had seized on the cavern. Seated on the ground beside the wall, my arm resting on an ottoman, I carelessly drew my gold from my side, and placed it on the carpet, and took a dagger from my belt. While holding the weapon in my hand I felt sleep approaching, but my eyes still remained open as if to gaze on the coming of that spirit-calming power. The mouth of the next cavern was opposite. I thought a murmuring sound issued from it; I listened; I attempted to move, but in vain. Suddenly a light form stood at the arched aperture in the dress of a Greek girl; she was as still as death—her eyes and smile were on me. I endeavoured to speak to her, but my voice slept; I essayed to raise my arms, but they slumbered. She was lovely, and I loved her! The collected tenderness of a long-encouraged passion appeared at once to possess me; the emotion was ecstatic. She raised her finger and made a sign for me to follow her, but the more I desired to obey, the more I seemed entranced and fixed. My mind whispered its sentiments; a deep flood of tender and eloquent expression rushed through me; passion breathed a language of its own, and, as if inspired, gave a harmony to speech such as was never known even in the writings of the prophets! O, if the words of my reverie could be repeated, they might be used as a charm; no ear could resist their magic; they would carry the soul away from its occupations into the trance which gave them birth, and with which their wondrous meaning ceased, and was forgotten.

In a moment the figure vanished, and another became gradually distinct at the farther end of the cave. It was that of Iago. He approached with a gliding motion, at first slowly and then with exceeding rapidity. The next moment he was before me grasping the gold which was at my side. Volition returned and I struck at his hands with my dagger ere I was well awake. But I soon found that the latter part of my dream was not unreal, for I had transfixed the hand of the thief to the ground. His howlings not only awoke me thoroughly, but every one else in the cavern. All rushed to the rescue of their comrade, and with drawn swords, rifles, and stiletos, stood above me. I still held my dagger fixed, with the thief in my power, and directed my eyes towards the robbers, who unanimously threatened my life. I saw that by releasing Iago I should add him to the band, and that, filled with resentment, he would instantly stab me. His friends seeing my determination, raised their arms to strike amid shouts of vengeance. The signal was given, but here a dispute arose among three or four of the band, who, considering me La Bestia's guest, interceded for my life. The next moment, however, La Bestia glided down the ladder and I was saved.

At the sudden appearance of their leader the handitti were startled and fell back, but still poised their weapons, as if to assert the justice of their cause. The chief saw, almost without verbal explanations, the nature of Iago's situation, his crime, and the sympathy of his friends, and roughly withdrawing the dagger, and returning it to me, made oaths the vehicle of a moral lecture to the offender, who retired abashed and punished, to be laughed at by those who

a few minutes before were his avengers. This matter arranged, La Bestia intimated to me his desire that I should accompany him from the cavern, and, taking leave of the company, I ascended the ladder, and was speedily in the open air with my deliverer.

Kunikos was at the mouth of the cavern: La Bestia had been absent for a few hours to keep an appointment with him at Volterra, on affairs connected with my arrest, and had accompanied him to the scene of my concealment. My friend Kunikos having heard from La Bestia of my situation, had undertaken, at the suggestion of the latter, to investigate the motives of Orazio's accusation. The brigand, after his interview with me in the prison the day before my escape, had suspected that as my traducer had become a gambler, a lust to obtain my property at the expense of my political existence, was the basis of his designs; and in order to test the accuracy of this view, he instructed Kunikos to visit Orazio, and implore him to suspend proceedings against me for the sake of my infant son, desiring him to pretend that I was privately married. The stratagem proved successful; for no sooner did Kunikos make use of it than Orazio feigned the deepest remorse, and hastened to explain away the evidence he had adduced against me before the authorities, which occasioned an order to be forthwith issued for my release.

This was the refreshing news which La Bestia and Kunikos had to impart. I gave the former all my gold, with the promise of more, and bidding him a thankful farewell, proceeded to Florence.

Kunikos returned to Volterra, and by the liberal use of my wealth, hushed up the facts connected with my escape. The order for my liberation was generally reported to have restored me to liberty.

It is worthy of observation, that when by the aid of imagination we not only see the worst that can happen, but experience mentally the details of our future misfortunes, instead of avoiding the path which leads to trouble, we rather pursue it with the confidence of one inured to its dangers. On the other hand, the prudent man, who has no fancy to bear him on, can realise no such vision, but avoids only what he anticipates with indistinct aversion. I saw that Orazio's hour was come; the reign of terror which he had exercised over my soul had created a reaction, the mildest effect of which must be to sweep his ashes from the soil. But the prophetic state of feeling which made me acquainted with this truth was different to that which I had suffered on former occasions. Before, there was an anxiety and eagerness accompanying my resolves, such as is felt by a new ruler in the popular cause; but now, the practice which I had enjoyed had softened my administrative efforts into a sentiment of tranquil and proud aristocracy. The hasty stride across my chamber, the fierce exclamation, did not characterize my designs; but reclining at full length on a downy couch, I thought over the particulars of a new battle, avoiding gracefully the evils which had betrayed me before, and smiling while I rehearsed negligently the final blow.

I remained in this quiet state of mind for some days, awaiting the arrival of the hour which was to incite me to action, an hour which Fate would wing and despatch to the mansion of his slave. I saw it approach too soon, for while seated in my study one evening, the history of Orazio seemed to pass smoothly over my mind, like a vessel on calm waters. Unexcited, I saw my friend designing against my peace, conspiring against my liberty, and coveting the lands of my inheritance. I saw myself dragged to a prison, haunted with frightful or tantalizing dreams,

escaping from my dungeon like a criminal, cast among robbers and threatened with death. I felt that I had risen superior to misfortune, and that I possessed more power now than before my last train of sufferings began. A painful void remained in my heart; I knew not wherefore, but it troubled me. Starting up, I commanded my soul to enter it, and say whence it arose. Alas! it was the forsaken seat of friendship; it was the place where the image of Orazio had been! But by its side there was another cell of affection in my breast, one on which my inward vision rested; and there, faithful as a nun, was my sister still. Her husband had left her side in my heart; widowed, her form dwelt within me—alone, deserted, in tears!

Recklessly, gloomily, sadly, I went to the Via Romana. My carriage drove into the court of my sister's palace. I entered—I ascended the steps—I walked into the presence of Angiolina—she flew into my arms! A floodgate seemed removed from between our emotions, which rushed into each other, and were lost in one troubled flood. She was dear to me—she was my sister!

Oh affection! that I had been set apart for thee. Who was more alive to tenderness—who perceived with sweeter gratitude its humanizing calm? I loved my sister above all worldly objects: her devotion, her kindred love entranced me; it quelled my passions—it suspended me in the midst of beatitude. Beautiful, angelic being! she departed early for heaven—she entered its distant convent at the age of seventeen; she has taken the veil of glory. But for her premature fate, I should have been an unbeliever. As it was, my love could not follow all her loveliness into corruption. It is true I traced the withering of that plant of Paradise—the dispersion of its features. I looked at all the haunts where she had rested—all was gone: the flowing garment found no form wherefrom to borrow grace; the mosaic of her boudoir uselessly awaited her footsteps; the marbles which she had worked into smiles of joy, had caught the sadness of the air; their smiles now expressed the—Alas! we are only survivors!

But it was only the earth which was thus cypress-shaded by desolation. My love followed her afar, and whenever I looked above, I saw her mingling with the archangels.

Mighty indeed was my affection, and at this interview it was unsubdued. I spoke of it with fervour, and implored my sister to live no more in sorrow, but to follow me to my home. But on this occasion my arts of persuasion were exercised with ill-success. Angiolina shuddered amidst tears, at the idea of quitting that new home which had destroyed her earliest hopes and pleasures, and replaced them with a phantom of love and uncomplaining sorrow. Orazio had loved her: she could not now remove herself from the scene of his affection. And, as he loved not another, she fondly anticipated a return of his eyes to her fair beauty—of his smiles to her devoted gaze. As I stood, half deterred from pressing my solicitations further, a sudden frenzy seized on my frame; my brain was maddened. My first impulse was to hurl myself on the ground, or to destroy the statues, for a sudden strength possessed me, which I could not control, nor, without violence, exhaust. I gnashed my teeth—I looked around—the roof and walls of the apartment seemed to await only the outbreak of my dreadful ire, to fall a mass of ruins. Without precisely knowing what I was about, I seized Angiolina, and rushed to my carriage with the prize. The touch of my hand overthrew every domestic that came near me; some lay prostrate on the corridor, others clung to the pallisades, or rolled down the marble steps, like masses of inanimate matter. Meantime, I reached my chariot, and was not long in conveying my sister to the palace whence I came.

I took her to her olden chamber. She was pale as the white rose, and all animation was suspended. For a long time she continued in her first swoon; and only opened her eyes to relapse into another. At midnight I left her to the care of her old nurse, and, looking out of a casement, which overlooked the court, observed the excessive beauty of the night. Below was a flood of light, above, its unnumbered sources. I was startled! A tremendous knocking at the gates shook the building; the porter rushed into the court—advanced, retreated, and stood still by turns, as if doubting how to act. I commanded him from the window where I was, to await my descent before he unlocked the gate. I joined him in the court, and ordered him to be in readiness to open the portal the instant the knocking was repeated. On such occasions as these, Orazio was all passion, and I all reason. I wished by delay to increase his anger, and my own tranquillity. In a moment, the gate was nearly shattered by the energy of Orazio's arm. It opened—he dashed into the court.

“Restore to me my beloved wife—my own, my adored Angiolina!” saying this, he rushed towards me with a naked stiletto, and piercing my cloak, lost his hold of the weapon, which was entangled in the folds. He drew another from his breast, and struck a blow at my heart: I turned aside, and with the instrument which he had first used, struck him behind as he passed me. At this instant, Angiolina flew into the court, and received her husband in her arms. She held him a short time, kissed his horror-frozen forehead, and fell with him on the ground. She rose to gaze at his face; she laughed and screamed. She tried to awake him. He was quite dead; and once more she dropped on the corpse and was insensible.

It was an event ever more to be regretted.

When I saw fully the situation to which I was reduced, I inwardly groaned with a deep and long inspiration. No excitement was mingled in the horrors of that hour; but a supernatural stillness hung over my spirit, such as the souls of heroes experience as they wander the margin of the black flood, and remember the deeds of old. I felt too familiar with my crime—it seemed to have been committed long before—and the spectacle at my feet appeared only monumental. How was this! Accustomed to view all things as predestined, instead of contemplating the present deed, my mind was with Him who, before the world was made, ordained all things to be. My spirit was in the dawn of destiny; it was in a period of history which was unwritten, and which the tradition of things increate had mysteriously handed down from dateless epochs, and periods of anarchy antecedent to the hour when first the face of the waters was ruffled.

If I felt awe, it was soothed by these sublime associations; for, in comparison with my deed, the heavens seemed new. But these privileged emotions passed away. Of a sudden I was seized by the hand of Time, and whirled into the present; my sister moved, and looked me in the face as the lamb which licks the hand of its murderer. I was human again. I wept aloud; I filled the court with my convulsed sobbings. My sister was carried from my sight.

And now that I looked on the corpse, I saw no vices left; but the virtues of my friend survived. It was thus that generosity decided; it made me my own accuser. I hated myself worse than I had ever hated a foe, and yet I could not take vengeance on myself. I was conscious that if I perished by my own hand, the mighty universe would have survived my insignificant fall, and in its unchanging aspect have been a satire on my obscure ambition.

Enlarging thoughts led me by degrees from the morbid prison of my soul. I looked on high and beheld the fair moon over the quadrangle of my palace, dressing with a dim beauty the

busts of my forefathers; and hundreds of stars drew my attention to the upper regions of the blue abysm. I saw glory in the heavens; I timidly approached and they resisted not; I mingled my genius with the tranquil majesty of the universe. It was a great moment in my life. My moral courage increased, and I drank a deep draught of the grandeur of nature. I then looked placidly down on the lifeless form, and gazed until the earth on which the victim lay seemed to glow as a sacred altar. It was finished; the sacrifice was accepted; the sceptre and crown were won. I smiled approvingly over the mysterious victory of that night, and in the presence of myriads of worlds, the authors and harbingers of fate, the triumph of Tragedy was confirmed.

Would that such chaste and classic deeds as these could teach Italia to struggle, and bring redemption to the soil! Would that they could force her sons to feel! A sense of suffering is the grand inspirer of these noble resemblances of crime; it survives its dire effects, and when its victory is complete, is the chief mourner of the fallen. It raises monuments to the dead; it apportions to the conquered a share of the glory. If, by such deeds, I could save my country, I would renew the struggle once more, and then modestly creep into my urn, and be never heard of again. But aspirations are useless; by others the prize is to be won. My domestics, when they heard what had happened, collected round me and the dead: they were moved by the sorrowful expression of my soul. I forsook my noble motives and my sense of greatness, to indulge in purest grief. A flood of agony rushed over my yielding face, and was responded to in the remotest seats of feeling. I wrung my hands with an action so exquisite, that sympathy, stronger than is often conveyed from man to man, was excited, and all who saw me burst into tears. I made no pause; but when my all-powerful sensibility was exhausted on one subject, I contemplated other troubles that had before fallen to my cruel lot, and made their invisible influence on my heart appear a portion of my latter sorrow. I mingled the old emotions with the new, and they appeared to my beholders a component part of the recent anguish. When the past refused to continue its supply of misery, I hailed the future, and gave it promise of yet worse woes. I offered up my sister; I inwardly pointed to her wretched life—her coming end; I regarded that insupportable event. I thought of the funeral procession; I saw myself, how wretched! forsaken by peace, in the loneliness which surrounds unloved affections, self-exiled, shunning the world, and ever returning there to be shunned. And suffering all this, I did not conceal a single pang, but encouraged those who saw me to almost burst their hearts at the sight of my prolonged distress.

I did not speak a word, but was fixed by turns in the various attitudes which represent the sufferings of a lofty mind. I was so full of power, that no earthly tribunal could have withstood my silent appeal. My cause was righteous, my emotions and looks were holy; piety was written on my brow.

Some may say that I murdered my brother, that I might know the sensations of a Cain. Avaunt, thou slanderer! The briskest tortures of hell afflict thy soul! The last invented inquisition of the infernal tyrant take thee to its burning bosom! the fiery thorns pierce thy conscience; and when goaded by immortal pain to confess thy lie, dumbness astonish thee, that though penitent, thou canst not express repentance; that in thy abject sorrow and its encircling torments, thou mayest remain without respite for ever!

I deny not, that when Fate had accomplished her work in me, and soothed my regrets, I found myself encircled with a poetic halo, and that I offered up its pure excess to immortality.



The peaceful and exemplary citizen of dramatic tastes, who converts skilfully the written history into tragedy, is startled, when he hears that the life of the bold tragedian must be spent in gloom : but it is true ! To me the tear of the widow was a gem ; the wasted countenance, a model ; the shriek of anguish, music ; the parental curse, more sweet than the papal blessing.

When I killed my brother, I was rich in tragedy, though poor in spirit, and unblessed. Did I not envy those who smiled while they conversed of yesterday and the morrow ? Ask the infidel if he would not be a Christian ; ask the childless if he would not be a father ; ask the wanderer if he would not have a home ! He who has neither parent, friend nor brother, wife or child ; who, homeless, sleepless, sisterless, wanders after immortality, is but a beggar who asks outside the gates of Paradise for bread.

My sister was lost to me ! She could not weep, or speak. Her eye was fixed ere it met its object. She saw the worst the moment when she looked on her sea of trouble ; she stood not therefore on its shore to regard its vastness, or to draw hope from its illusive horizon, but plunged at once into its depths to rise no more !

I almost felt responsible for these melancholy consequences of her bereavement ; but I bore my misfortune with submission. I sat by her, watched her, administered to her ; but she scarcely observed me. I did not murmur, but gave myself up to resignation. Her eyes moved vacantly over all objects alike.

On the third day I found her on her knees before a crucifix, embracing the portrait of Orazio ; her head resting on the little altar before which she knelt. I called on her by name ; I placed my arm around her, and raising her from her position, drew her to my breast. She was stiff and cold ; the chill of death entered my frame ; I uttered an involuntary shriek, and dropped the corpse from my embrace. It fell like lead, and the miniature was shattered to atoms.

Her chamber had become a sepulchre ; her body had rested in the attitude of prayer for her departed soul.

On the sixth day the family chapel was lined throughout with black, and the windows were blinded with crape ; while, to displace the darkness, many hundred wax-lights burned in the place of mourning. A baronial coronet was fixed in the centre of the ceiling, and waving folds of ermine gracefully descended from it to every corner of the chapel. On the spot below the coronet, a chaste cenotaph was erected, and on it the coffins of the dead rested. All the Tuscan nobility were invited, and numbers of both sexes crowded to witness the high mass, which preceded the funeral. I took my place apart from the rest, and hid my spirit in mourning. The great altar, whose candlesticks were of solid gold, was illuminated ; and the solemn forms of high mass were commenced in religious pride. The organ pealed forth, in mechanical grandeur, its imitation of human woe, and the voices of chanters mingled with it a penetrating harmony. One particular voice rose higher and sweeter, and seemed to thrill rapturously through the angelic attitudes which lived in the frescoes above.

It is the custom, as you know, for none to be admitted to these unsocial meetings who are not attired in black, with the exception of those who are about to quit the world for a monastic life. Among the assembly, indeed, I observed a female in white, bedecked with jewels and flowers. A sad expression of countenance was contrasted with these gay habiliments. The virgin was about to take the veil, and thus, for the last time, she appeared among men in the pleasing attire of fashion. As I gazed, I envied her resignation. " Her mind," thought I, " is

better fortified than mine; she rejects, instead of hourly cultivating, the little ambition which meets encouragement from the world. She adopts instead the hopeless reality of a cell, and patiently expects the future!" As I thus reflected, I saw that her sad face was lovely; I longed to see her smile! Her eyes were too soft for gladness; they revealed how passion had ripened unencouraged, uncheered; they told that the convent had shown her more sympathy than the lover. Her looks seemed to speak for her features, of loveliness unadorned. My eyes remained fixed on her ravishing beauty, until they grew unsteady and floated in the voluptuous image. All other consciousness had vanished.

Her name was Adora.

Meantime, the bishop had commenced his sermon; unheard by me, he had alluded to the fate of Orazio and Angiolina. All save myself were in tears: Adora wept. I continued to gaze. She raised her eyes to the coronet, and perhaps to heaven; she dropped them in full-orbed vision on mine. I was startled! She perceived my confusion, but her eyes gradually fell into their wonted supineness, and, by all the fervid and penetrating adoration of my own, I could not restore her gaze. A loud throbbing within my breast disturbed me; I looked around, and saw the monumental figure of my mother. Her marble eyes represented the absence of vision, but her benignant smile was saved, and seemed to pause upon the cenotaph before her. The crape-lined walls, the burning candles, were restored to my long-abstracted view; on my ear fell the voice of the preacher. A noise like the roaring of a distant sea, announced to me that the congregation was rising, and ready to mingle again in worldly scenes.

Adora had disappeared; but I remembered that she was the being whose image had appeared to me while I slept in the robber's den. Thus ended my six-days' labour, which I retired from in sincerest prayer; and in humble and pious imitation of my Creator, and, in obedience to his command, I rested on and kept holy the seventh, which was the sabbath-day.

It may appear to you, O Pulci, that this free confession contains inconsistencies of principle and action, not easily reconcilable in one man. Often have I thought so too, when, in the same hour, feelings the most humane, have been succeeded by the wish to end the world by fire, and to involve myself and my species in one common ruin. But the type of this is found in nature; birth is cotemporary with death—growth with decay. The volcanic region, the empire of the avalanche, are apparently inimical to the safety of living things; winter and summer, night and day, appear inconsistent; but between all that is consistent or inconsistent, beautiful and brutal, favourable and unpropitious, an intrinsic harmony subsists. The intermediate links which connect them are hidden from mortal view, but all spring from a central government, whose effective laws constitute the tyrannous republic of creation. The soul which blasphemes, feels not a virtue in its words, but a bewildered lamentation of the circumstances which keep piety afar; the heart which is cruel only takes revenge on the fate which placed it too remote from rich benevolence. Evil and good are members of the same family, as much as ugliness and beauty; the one is an irregular manifestation of the other; whether, as in the first instance in mind, or as in the second in form. Thus out of the revolution of good comes evil. Let not philosophy then degrade it too low, its progenitors were perfect.

For many days after the funeral I remained, as you may suppose, in my study, involved in the duties of meditation. The time passed rapidly, but my thoughts kept pace with it in its flight. When the twilight of each evening appeared, my mind cast on it a maddening glare, and

I paused exhausted, as if to rest and contemplate the race which I had run with the hours. In proportion as my strength vanished, my ideas became more fluent.

The night did not put a period to my labours. I still went on in the pleasing madness of fancy. I depicted scene by scene my late trials, and the events appeared as vividly before me as if they still had been in the course of representation on the theatre of the world. The senses were my chief prompters; they opened the memory of recent disaster, and its circle of passions.

Night after night I persisted in these delights, until, at length, I sank back on the couch in a state of insensibility, a martyr to poetic truth.

I know not how I reached my chamber, but when consciousness returned, I found myself on the brink of frenzy. My presence of mind, however, did not entirely forsake me in that hour, for although I muttered occasionally an unmeaning sentence, I oftener busied myself in trying to extinguish the wild thought, and to strangle the monsters of fancy. After the lapse of several days, I slept, and dreamed that I was buried with Orazio and Angiolina. The dream was tranquil; I awoke refreshed, and recovered from the low fever which had prostrated my frame. But I remained weak in mind and body; and felt every thing so acutely that I could not, without pain, even pluck a flower from its stem.

And still, with all this unhealthy sensibility, a feeling of apathy was coexistent. At times I felt as if I had received a friendly visit from Death, who had appeared in a fascinating shape to invite me to his still domain; and that I had neither accepted nor declined his sad but pleasing offer of an untroubled asylum. I could not think—I dared not feel; for by the autumn which had prematurely visited my soul, my hopes had been scattered; and these lay around me like withered leaves, which a single spark of emotion must have consumed. Tears unbidden traced their way from time to time down my cheek, as I mused on by-gone days and scenes of affections lost; on noble prospects blighted, and disappointed ambition; on human nature denied the cheering rights entailed originally on existence. Would that education had trained me to a happy life, instead of casting me among poisonous weeds, and their intoxicating flowers! Would that my Creator had been my instructor! that he had taught me the meaning of the mind, the uses of the heavenly bodies, the policy of birth, the wisdom of death! For all has been vain speculation; and in the end, when the dispassionate judgment takes its farewell gaze at human knowledge, it regards the smiling babe and lofty reasoner with equal pity, but knows not to which to award the prize. They both appear competent in their several paths, but the last is deepest in error.

Such were my reflections then, and while in this mood I received a visit from Kunikos, who came to announce to me the illness of the Abbate Bernabò. He informed me that the philosopher considered his end to be nigh, and that he was anxious to see me. I hastened to the Via di Bisogno, and was met at the door of the Abbate's dwelling by a boy, who conducted me below. We came to a vault, from the floor of which my little guide removed some loose masonry, and exposed a trap-door, which he opened and bade me descend. I was encouraged to do so by the Abbate's voice from beneath. A low spiral flight of steps admitted me to a small apartment of a circular form. The wall and ceiling were covered with Egyptian characters; on one side of the marble floor a flame issued which I found was volcanic, and arose from an inflammable stratum which the philosopher had discovered below, similar in kind to that of Monte di Fo, and to the far-famed eruptions of fire which in Persia are the foundations of a religious creed. On the other side sat Bernabò, on an Egyptian sarcophagus, enveloped in a mantle, and with a countenance

pale and transparent. His eye had changed its brightness, and now emitted a feeble light, as if its remaining function were to conduct the soul it served to the shades.

"This," said the philosopher, "is my last abode. I have lived in the sacred lore of the Egyptians, and amidst its marvellous revelations I will repose. No one except thyself and Angiolo, who conducted thee hither, is acquainted with this place. Preserve the secret; permit me not to be interred with men. Here, as if among the most ancient and the mightiest, let me lie in peace. Though our tombs are far apart, though lands and waters intervene, there is a sympathy even in death which connects the great. Their mansions are alike. The pride of death everywhere has the same austere and awful stillness. Here would I rise again, as I believe I shall, and as the Egyptians believed. They knew that Ceres reigned in the realms below; they knew that though their sacred bodies might lie in state for thousands or millions of years, their return to life would not be retarded, but that the time had been fixed by precedents known only to the Universal Legislator; a return to their former life of glory, whose shadow, too vast for space, was cast over time, that future ages might receive it, and feel the greatness of its ancient immortality.

"Respecting my funeral rites, as I shall die to-day, let me be embalmed to-morrow, after the most perfect model. Within this sarcophagus thou wilt find the implements and the spices; the crooked iron, the sharp stone, the cassia and the myrrh. When the seventy days are finished, place me within this sarcophagus, and leave me for ever to my Creator."

I was deeply affected at the calm manner in which the philosopher directed these solemn rituals to be performed. I pressed his cold hand, and promised to fulfil his last commands. After a short pause I said, "Oh, father, how has thy life been passed? If it be not too late, give me the fruits of thy learning and patient meditation."

"Thy request," replied the philosopher, "affords me joy in my dying hour; it was not more than I expected of thee. When Death is our chief attendant, we love to have human flatterers at our side; I find that praise is sweet to the dying ear; and perhaps when we live again, our first feelings will be those which were our last."

"When we last met," I continued, "we spoke of the materials of which the universe consists as of an imperishable nature."

"They were admitted to be so by the priests of the Egyptians, if I have deciphered their characters aright; and what is more, the experience of thousands of years has confirmed their opinion. But not only did those wise men consider that matter was imperishable, but that its laws were immutable and eternal, and this opinion has equally been confirmed by time."

I readily gave my assent to what the Abbate had delivered, and being anxious to hear his further views, I was silent.

"These same Egyptians," resumed the dying man, "in their sacred writings, declare that the universe is finite in extent, and that He who compasseth it round about is infinite alone. That Infinite Power hath numbered the stars as He hath the grains of sand on the sea-shore, and hath given to each a name. Though boundless they appear to man, they are bounded by omniscient vision; and even as each is individualized, so a finite number represents the whole. Canst thou comprehend these weighty truths?"

"I comprehend," said I, "that the Infinite Power hath framed a finite system, hath given it immutable laws, and formed it so that it may last for ever."

"Then," said the philosopher, "thou comprehendest much; but the Egyptians have taught us more. They declare, that from these truths we must deduce a resurrection of all things from the dead. 'For,' say they, 'the laws of matter are ever in action, change succeeds to change; their activity decomposes the hills, raises mountains from the deep, destroys old forms of life, engenders new, and so varies the aspect of all, that every atom must finally be employed in every possible way throughout the universal system.'"

"But though this change may proceed for ever," inquired I, "can it affect the individual who has lived and died?"

"It can affect him; not once only, but through all eternity. For inasmuch as a finite universe cannot admit of an infinite variety of change, the time must come when every thing has been accomplished, and when all that has been will recommence its solemn march."

When he had uttered these words, the philosopher sank back on the sarcophagus and breathed no more. I placed him carefully in an attitude of rest, and looking on the face, which intellect had once illumed, I said, "Thy soul will occupy that grand abode again."

I had perceived his meaning; it was strange; but who can fathom eternity? "Let us walk humbly in life," said I, "and death will be our great instructor."

I thought the corpse started at my words.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE boy Angiolo, who had conducted me to the vault of death, now presented himself, and wept the loss of a friend and master. I regarded the innocent face of the little mourner with admiration and pity, which soon kindled into love. He was as lovely a child as I had ever seen, and when he raised his melting eyes to mine in search of compassion, a tear rushed down my face. I told him that he need not fear that he should ever want a friend, and encouraged him to follow me to my home; on which his tears burst out afresh, accompanied with bitter sobs. We quitted the tomb, its unextinguished flame, and new inhabitant, and when Angiolo had again concealed the entrance, we proceeded to the palazzo.

My troubled life had known comparatively, from first to last, only a few bright moments; but my relation with Angiolo brought with it a period of sunshine, which recompensed me for many a bitter pang before and since experienced. He had lived, before he knew me, in the glad employment of a great man, and witnessed, during his servitude, one continuous scene of benevolence and reflection. He was the most faithful creature that ever attached himself to the unhappy! His tastes had been unconsciously raised above vulgar ambition; he pined naturally after the good, which had begun to assume in him the graces of cultured beauty. His purity of heart corresponded to his exquisite features and looks of candour. Often, when I have been studying silently new schemes of enterprise, he has observed a sadness on my brow, and watched me with a pity so intense, as to disturb and dissipate my evil counsels. His full and beaming eyes held all the intellect of affection; their intelligence, never deviating from the straight path, saw only the wisdom of virtue. To him vice appeared to express the sufferings of truth; he thought evil a name of misfortune.

Angiolo assisted me to fulfil the injunctions of Bernabò, whom we embalmed after the manner of the ancients. Kunikos, who was an Egyptian of Greek descent, rendered us much assistance in furnishing the particulars of a process of embalming, which he pretended had been transmitted to him from past ages. But I suspect the father of history was his teacher. He was inquisitive, moreover, respecting the Abbate's remains, but whatever suspicions he entertained, he restrained them, for, being of an idle, but of a friendly temper withal, except in his cynical moods, he soon ceased to press his inquiries, when he found that they were decidedly useless.

When the body of Bernabò, after having been properly treated with spices, had remained in nitre for seventy days, we swathed it in cotton, and, having encased it in an antique model of superior art, we placed it within its sarcophagus. It is not known, to this hour, that in the centre of Florence there exists an Egyptian tomb; that its flame illumines the worshipper, and

burns in honour of Isis, the ancestress of religion—the wonder of traditionary ages—inscrutable to even those who said, “Let the pyramids be!” and were obeyed.

Kunikos, as you must remember, was the severest satirist of our time. I liked him not, though he was clever and useful; for he hated human nature without a cause, and from his heart despised a woman.

But I strongly suspected that the dislike of this man for the fair originated in revenge and mortification; for he was almost too ugly to be endured. He had a squint so sinister in its expression, that I have heard the wits say, he could not repeat his prayers without looking askance at the devil. My suspicions were awakened by the interest he took in Angiolo, whom, I found, he had entrusted to the Abbate Bernabò without any account of the boy's parentage. He was pleased at the attachment which I had formed for the child, and, from the time that it became an inmate of my house, was himself a constant visitor. I owed to Kunikos some revenge for the uneasiness his frightful appearance had frequently, at critical moments, awakened in my thoughts, and the baneful influence of his laconic sarcasm on my actions. But he had saved me from the hands of the law, and, tempered by gratitude, I resolved that my triumph should disturb only his equanimity.

The first time I found him alone, I told him I was in love with an object unknown; and related to him the circumstances under which I had seen Adora in the chapel, during the funeral service. To this communication he replied with a sneer; but when I dilated on her excessive beauty in unmeasured terms, and declared my intention of ransacking every convent in Italy till I rescued her from the arms of the Church, he looked at me with an expression indicating contempt rather than surprise, and asked me if I was aware that my sacrilegious misdeeds were already known to the sacred heads of the Church, and that excommunication would be the probable issue of the inquiry?

I knew not whether this malicious insinuation was true or false; but horror thrilled through my veins at the announcement. My hair partook of the sensation, and seemed to bristle; my flesh turned cold. I almost involuntarily seized Kunikos by the throat, and accusing him of the basest falsehood, told him to confess that he was practising on my fears, or expect the worst of punishments. It was only after a severe struggle that he extricated himself from my gripe. As soon as he had recovered from his alarm, he feigned remorse at having discomposed me, however unintentionally; and pretended that, although such a rumour as he had given expression to had reached him, he believed it to be without foundation. He then rallied me on my love for the unknown, but promised me that he would endeavour to trace her steps—not for his own purposes, but for mine!

Now, somewhat recovered from my terror, I began to ridicule Kunikos for his pretended aversion to the fair sex, and told him that I suspected he had not received all those endearments from them which were due to his merits; adding, that perhaps my influence with them might be successfully exerted in his favour. This boast elicited the reply which I sought. He declared that I was shunned and abhorred by women; that not one could be found in Florence who did not regard me with hatred; that where a hundred would thankfully acknowledge his merits, if he had gallantry enough, or inclination, to make them felt, not one would look on me with complacency.

I asked Kunikos if he would accept a proof to the contrary on the following night? He expressed his willingness to be converted, and pledged his word to be with me at midnight.

Having made my arrangements with the deepest satisfaction to myself, at the appointed hour I stood in the corridor and awaited the appearance of the cynic. He was punctual, and wore on his countenance an unusual expression of good-humour, though his lip preserved its wonted curve of satire. He had given more than ordinary attention to his toilet, for his neck was enveloped in fine lace, and a chain hung over his vest.

I conducted Kunikos through a suite of rooms into the saloon, and in a moment we were in the midst of at least fifty beautiful women, arrayed in splendid attire. As we entered, we discovered some of them at their harps in full play, while others sang in sweet accord. The notes were those of lamentation, and Kunikos stood still in ravishment at the sounds of high-wrought pathos, and wondered at his own feelings.

"These, our fair countrywomen," I whispered, "have composed this music from respect to my late misfortunes."

Kunikos paid less attention to my words than to the enchanting scene. On every face there was an expression of heartfelt grief; and where the words of the music related to my domestic woes, all eyes were turned towards me in tears, and the cynic, overcome by the effect, with difficulty restrained his emotion.

"Hast thou invited me to the banquet that I may be converted—that I may know that feeling lives in woman?"

I looked sad, and made no reply. Meanwhile, all eyes regarded me with a pity which gave new power to the hand and voice, and was responded to by the deepening melody.

When the sounds ceased, the ladies approached us, and I advanced to return their salutation, and to many of them I introduced my companion. He had never before been thrown amongst so distinguished a circle; nor was he aware that the Florentine women would suffer themselves to be thus entertained, or that they possessed such powers of fascination. He was well received by all he addressed; and, although he feigned indifference, whenever I scanned him with my looks, I saw that his cheeks were flushed, his eyes on fire, and his heart in the first flames of amorous delight.

Refreshments succeeded the music; and wine, the most choice and delicate, opened the hearts of the party. Kunikos began to converse more freely than ever, and casting off all disguise, expressed his tenderest ideas. The music was renewed, and Kunikos listened with rapture at the side of one who was surpassingly beautiful. He told her which were his favourite airs, and she repeated them in solo, addressing her voice and looks to him alone. She was tall in stature; her eyes were full and downcast; her cheeks were suffused with a continual blush; her voice was firm and musical; and when she smiled, her bashfulness seemed to vanish, though only to return with her naturally serious and modest expression. There are women whose forms are so noble and voluptuous, that consciousness seems ashamed to inhabit so much beauty, except at the moment when they speak; then their smile diverts their attention from the inviting charms which they possess, and shame brightens into animation. Such was the case with this fine creature, who now absorbed the entire attention of the cynic. She flattered—she intoxicated him with her conversation; and well she might; for she was possessed of beauty which, even when her eyes were abashed, spoke love irresistibly, from the fulness of its bloom. I never before had seen a man more committed to the influence of feminine graces. He came up to me, and squeezed my hand as if I had been his lover; and, for the first time in my life, I saw him contented and happy.



Her name was Leonora Gaeta.

While Kunikos was thus engaged with his chosen fair, I divided my attentions among the rest, and amused myself by turns with all. The scene was brilliant, and the decorations were on a scale of great magnificence. A costly entertainment of sweets and viands was served in an adjoining room; the wines flowed; the eyes sparkled—and the apartments resounded to a general expression of delight.

"What means this charming display?" inquired the cynic: "I candidly confess that you have triumphed."

"Wait another hour," I replied, "and you shall learn. Meantime, continue in your enjoyment."

He willingly obeyed, and renewed the proofs of his love for the fine Leonora. The hour was on the confines of dawn, when the music was renewed, and the company arranged themselves in pleasing groups, and moved to the sounds in dance. At length the party made preparations to disperse; each female took a separate farewell of me and my friend, and expressed joy at my recovery from sickness and sorrow.

"Now, Kunikos," I said, "let me tell you by what art I secured the admiration which this night has been lavished on me by the fair. Know that I am about to take a long journey,—whither I know not—and perhaps those who have now left me, may never see me more."

"But what have you done," asked the cynic, "to deserve of them such unrestrained affection?"

"Have I not won their respect and love?" reiterated I.

"It is most true," was the cynic's reply.

"Every man," I continued, "who enjoys the friendship of women, must be possessed of some merit which their discriminating eye has detected. Your conquest of Leonora's heart is an example. You threw off your natural reserve, or assumed indifference, and she saw your deserts; time will prove whether her fidelity will reward them."

"She has sworn eternal constancy!" exclaimed the cynic.

"And may her faith endure!" said I; "but perhaps you have to learn a lesson. I knew as well as you pretended to do, how hollow is the heart of woman. Still, like all others, except yourself, I wished to enjoy the semblance of their regard, not caring for its source, so long as a manifestation was given. As I have told you, I am impelled to take a long journey, and wishing, before I leave, that my past misfortunes should be regretted by the fair, I hired these lovely creatures to come and act their sorrow in your presence, and methinks they have performed their part as well as it is every day acted in the world."

For a moment the cynic was struck dumb, and then, in a hollow and satiric laugh, attempted to disguise his mortification. It failed of the desired effect, so he repeated the sound and retired.

It was the bitterest laugh that ever shook the heart of a cynic!

When he was gone, I laughed; and an hour afterwards I found myself in the same place, still laughing! On that day, Pulci, it pleased heaven to visit me with affliction. A cloud seemed to descend on my soul, and to bear me upwards through regions where objects of sense were not; but only hurry, doubt, despair—forgive me, I have lost the thread of my discourse—my memory is confused and ruffled. Where did I say—where are we? All around seems strange! Is this Sienna?

"Let me leave you until to-morrow," said Pulci; "the fourth hour has struck, and you are in want of rest."

"Stay for a few minutes," resumed I, "for I am now better, and I would pass through the scene of mental darkness, the memory of which has again broken upon me, before you leave."

I had said that a dark cloud enveloped my soul soon after I had taken my revenge on the cynic: I think those were my words. It is very strange, but I see that, on recurring to that period, I have struck on the tender seat of my delusion, and that for a moment its disordered function has been renewed. But now the dangerous emotion is over; like the dying reverberation of a long-drawn discord, the evil has lasted but a few moments; but it has prompted memory to a perception of the entire succession of events.

I found that, during this visitation, I resumed the monk's habit which I had worn to effect my escape from prison, and sallied forth into the open country, unconscious of the presence of my reason. A supernatural impulse guided me as if that impulse were on its way to the holy sepulchre, while I passively followed in its path. I laboured under a load of sin, which glided on to receive a promised pardon. But my body felt unconcerned; it was but the vessel which held the repentance, and the impulse which it followed was unconscious of toil. The objects of the journey seemed afar, but their distance to diminish, though the means of my progress were unfelt: for the sole emotion was confined to the presence of a glowing spirit conducting itself from pain.

I sat before the moss-grown walls of the Ferrini domain: the owner was no more;—his race was extinct;—his sister was in the plains of Lombardy, the wife of another, the mother of many. There, enshrined in the midst of Corinthian columns and gardens, where the mulberry flourished and the orange grew, she dwelt in peace; her affections all employed, and the memory of her first love healed. There she thanked heaven, once a year, that she had escaped my toils; and there she blessed her children, the witnesses of present gratitude. I sat before the moss-grown walls, and wept as I thought of the past. Angiolo was in tears by my side! My reason had returned, my pilgrimage was done. But away with the recollection—it overwhelms me again! Leave me, and return to-morrow.

As I said this, I trembled like a withered tree which stood alone in the desert, and resisted the blast. As I write it, the feeling returns; I tremble like one placed in the frozen regions of sentiment, whose sun for ever has set. I paced my study, and finally paused before a figure of Tragedy; but the form shook, and fell from its pedestal. When I looked again, a statue of Minerva filled its place. The walls of the chamber moved; the monuments within them receded; and I was left alone on the pavement, still contemplating the new figure. And now a new structure rose, of vast proportions and chaste design—it was the temple of the goddess who had appeared to me in marble. But soon the temple of Minerva crumbled into ruins, the pillars fell, the pediment was crushed, the cornice was reduced to fragments, the goddess herself was struck by lightning, and, deprived of her divine aspect, stood like a maimed mendicant,—a mortal in decay!

I stood in the midst of the devastation; but ere I had power to lament the change, there rose a new master-piece of architectural art. The walls were of black and white marble, so likewise was the floor, whereon the events of sacred history were described in mosaic forms. I was

lost in admiration of the daring skill of man, when I beheld two figures in the distant gloom. They were occupied in contemplating the decays of this Tuscan-Gothic Duomo.

"Tell me where I am?" I cried, when I recognised, in the spectral figures, the persons of Pisano and Agostino. Without heeding me further, they pointed to two vases at the entrance, and were lost to view.

I took the direction of the vases, and while hesitating which to examine first, I saw two other figures, one at each vase. They both beckoned me towards them. In the one I saw Minerva again; in the other Giacomo della Quercia.

I approached the first, and looking into the vase, I remembered having seen it before. It was filled with holy water, and sculptured fishes rested on its inner surface. I remembered then that I was in the ancient cathedral of Sienna. The vase which Minerva guarded was a relic of antiquity; the other was the work of the sculptor who stood beside it. I remembered also that the persons whom I first saw had erected the cathedral on the site where Minerva had formerly been worshipped.

My limbs now trembled more than ever, and I felt beneath me an oft-repeated shock, like unto the warnings which the people who live on a volcanic soil are wont to receive from time to time; but I remained where I was, resolving to brave the worst that might happen. I stretched out my hand to dip my finger into the holy water; it boiled as my touch approached it, and there issued from the pavement a yell, followed by roars of mirth.

I turned round, and saw the cupola illumined, and the pavement beneath it bright. I saw Maria Ferrini standing there, dressed in a funereal stole, and wearing an iron coronet. Horror thrilled through my frame; my breast was blighted with cowardice; I shrank from her presence, but knew not where to take refuge. She walked to and fro with measured and appalling grace; the dignity of her eye was in strong contention with trouble; and, whether in this world or the next, I saw that she had been a sufferer.

She turned towards me, and without deigning to lift her eyes, she thus addressed her words:—

"I was of a proud and wealthy race; my territories reached from the north unto the south. When I loved thee, I was beautiful, innocent, and pious. But I had wealth, and that had a fatal influence on my heart; it prompted me to spurn thee for thine errors; it has driven many noble women to destruction. After I loved thee, I discovered that thou wert subtle and arrogant—qualities, whose union may overreach the wise;—the first I despised, the last I dreaded. I struggled with affection, I vanquished my passion by force. Thou also didst struggle; but not to conquer. I heard of thy solitary tears, and said, 'Whence is it, O heaven! that one virtuous being can be unkind to another?' for I knew my fault, but dismissed it from my conscience with prayer, instead of atoning for it; and thus was I the cause of all thy heart-rending crimes, and of that insanity which has tormented and blasted thy long existence."

"We parted; I was married, and thou wert a wanderer. I taught my offspring the purity as well as the pomp of religion. In the first I saw the nature of the angels, in the second an emblem of the imperial majesty of heaven. My thoughts seldom recurred to thee; I lived with the fear of death before my eyes; I died in faith, beloved as a mother, wife, and friend; I was buried as a Christian, and masses were performed for the welfare of my soul.

"I solemnly believed that I should be saved.

"Think not what I am next to utter vain ; for I am numbered with the lost, and vanity is not proof against tortures. Pride resists their force ; it is indestructible as the asbestos mountains, which glow for ever unconsumed.

"Oh, how could one so angelic be inhabited by a self-deluding soul ? I was good and pious ; I was an example to the high and low ; but my faith—my hope—my charity, were pride ; and on that I built my salvation !

"When I have stood before my Venetian mirrors and surveyed myself, I have smiled on the shadow, and allured by its secret flattery, I have seen that heaven was expressed in my face ; when others have told me so, I have rebuked them ! But I never checked myself ; if I have sown new seeds of truth, I have nurtured weeds, because their little blossoms have looked harmless and fair !

"My husband was proud ; he adored me ! My children were beautiful as their country and its clime. Italy was interwoven in their minds ; they shared in the genius of the land. Some of them were hurried from me by the plague ; one died in combat ; but I bore my losses with a firmness proportioned to their severity, and was proud of being sustained by Christian resignation. Bitter was the hour of my death to those who survived me ; and the calm confidence in which I died swelled the flood of their sorrow. The tears which moistened my tomb were shed by mourners in agony. The spot where my body lies buried is esteemed holy ; the wicked repent beside my remains.

"My spirit quitted the palace ere the body reached its home. It rose swiftly to the skies, winged by the virtues, and directed in its way by hope. I triumphantly passed through every trial—I approached nearer and more near to the crystal battlements of Paradise. I looked at them with the meekness of an angel. I felt proud at my high destiny and success. I arrived—but the ramparts were forsaken!—solitude prevailed, and silence ! No one came forward to meet me!—my arrival was unhailed ! I looked around in fear and anguish. I listened—I heard thy voice ascend from the earth, saying, reproachfully, 'Thou haughty woman, to thee I owe my destruction !' Thy soliloquy was heard in heaven. My hopes fled. I shrieked and fell !

"I looked beneath me, and saw a mighty city on a sea of flame. I beheld a villa in the deep, built of the burning adamant. It was a solitary structure, and resembled the one I had inhabited in my own land, though it glowed in solid fire.

"I alighted there, and for years have remained a prisoner. Neither the solitude, which is eternal, nor the searching flame, have purged away my pride. To this hour, alas ! as I sit in state, the sole admirer of my heroic endurance—of my lofty origin, and earthly rank, I deem myself a distinguished sufferer.

"I have been thy ruin in life ; but oh ! if thou hast pity, repent, and let thy soul be saved. Thy salvation, which, if thou art wise, is nigh, may diminish the rigidity of my doom, and finally we may meet in heaven.

"I return to my mansion—to the translucid walls, which glow from red to pale,—to the architectural adornments, and classic columns. On a couch this lovely form must still recline in pain ; the native charms of this countenance return to anguish, while I continually utter : 'What have I done—how am I fallen !' "

No sooner had she ceased, than her form mingled with the air. My chamber was restored to my dizzy vision, and the statue of Tragedy was again before my eyes. But the night had not yet revealed all its terrors. While I stood on the same spot, regarding an Egyptian head of

colossal size, I heard a noise, and, on looking around, saw several mummies, which were placed upright in the study, in tremulous motion. I summoned courage, and extending my hands towards them, tried to hold them still. I succeeded, but was shortly raised from the floor, and thrown backwards by their renewed vibrations. No sooner had I recovered my balance, than I saw two immense figures, whose heads resembled in size the domes, whose limbs the columns of a temple; and whose beards were like the frozen cataracts of a rock.

These awful forms bore a sarcophagus between them; and placing it on the floor, sat, one on either side of it, with their hands falling over their knees, in the stillness of death;—not that death which overtakes the human form, but which may be supposed to have suddenly arrested in their mild career, the gods, whose remote origin, forgotten in their lengthened life, had vainly encouraged them to usurp the insignia of immortality. With looks composed, they had ceased to be; and their mighty unconcern told the memory of the spirit which expressed that surviving feature!

While thus they sat, their solid dimensions striking greater terror into me than if the infuriated ghosts of the giants of old had presented their pallid fronts, the lid of the sarcophagus opened, and, like an antique Lazarus, Bernabò arose from the dead. He beckoned. I was frozen to the spot; my jaw fell—my hair erected itself to the stiffness of icicles, and shrivelled my scalp—dismay unsouled me. He trampled towards my shelves, and grasping the ponderous tomes, threw them into his sarcophagus.

“I awaited the great teacher, Death!” said he, in a whisper, “but have learned nothing new; fifty years have elapsed since we met, and have been the corpse’s holiday. It is time to resume my studies.”

He then took down an illuminated volume on the subject of purgatory, and pondered it for a long time, shaking his head often, with an expression of doubt, and deliberately tearing the drawings which pictured the souls of sinners in flame-girt probation.

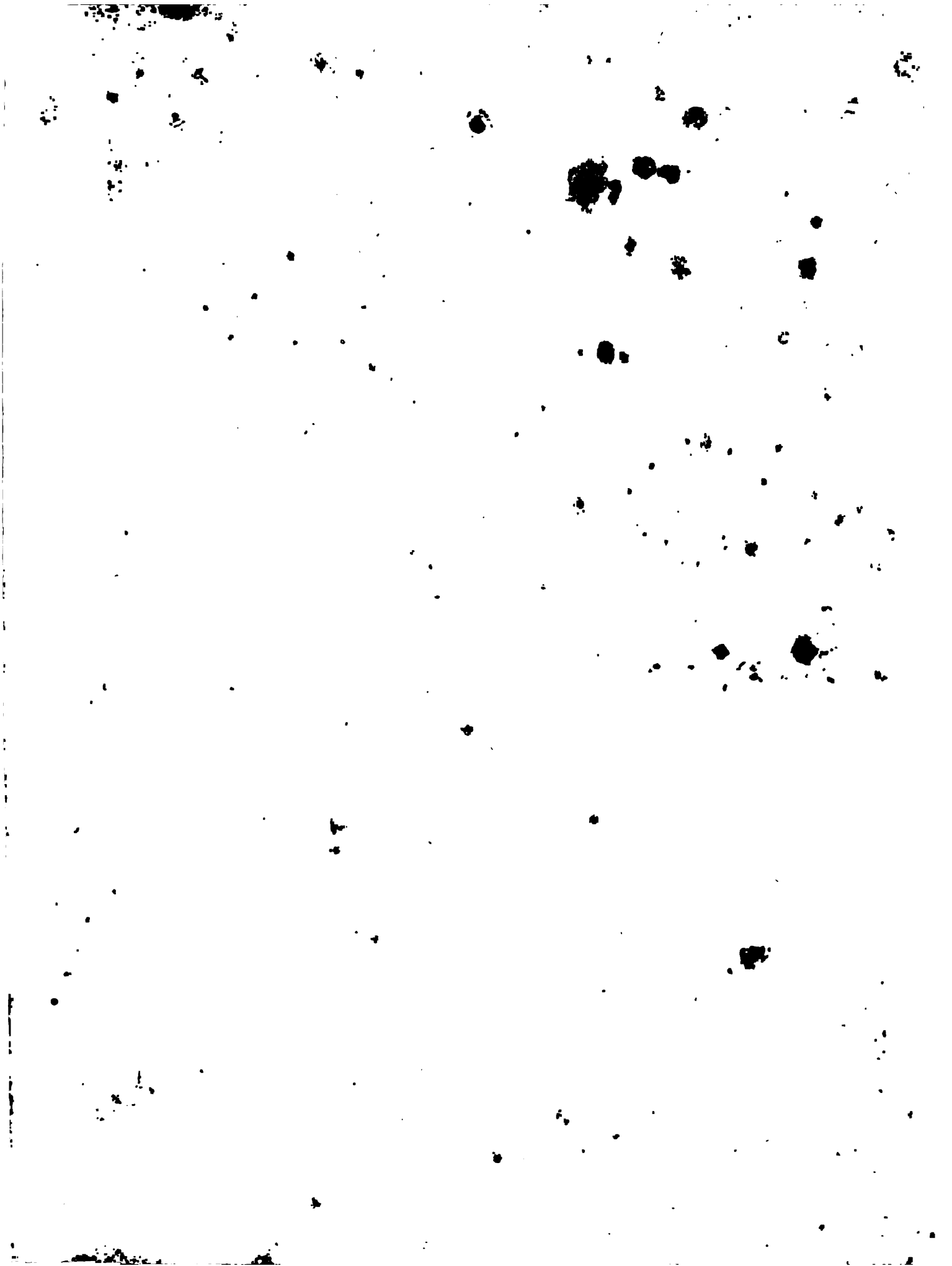
“In the name of our Redeemer,” I muttered, “leave me until the grave arms me to contend with the future.”

My appeal was efficacious, the spectral representation vanished, and I saw only the bust.

“O man, thou laboratory of anguish! how much longer am I doomed to inherit thy shape?”

“O God! how much longer am I sentenced to inhabit this penal star? If mortal was ever resigned to Thy will, it is I—then pardon my hope of mercy, and send me refreshing slumber.”

My prayer was entertained. I slept for eight hours, unconscious of the existence of the Divine Power who had granted me the boon of rest; unconscious even of myself. And when I awoke, I returned thanks, and prayed that I might sleep equally well on the morrow.







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## CHAPTER VII.

WHEN I left my chamber, I departed the city and ascended the heights of Bello-squardo, which overlook the palaces and towers of Florence, and command a wide-extending garden of villas. There I stood and gazed on the meridian sun, and thus addressed the luminary :—

“Thou sun, on whose throne sits the majesty of day ; whose empire the peace of worlds, the prosperity of nature, and thyself proclaim ; I have never cursed thy light ! Thou key-stone of the firmament—I, who have ever gazed on thee as now, and am the last who hath looked on thy plenteous orb—I, who have erred the most of men, now bless thee ! When my heart was cold, thou didst infuse into it benevolence ; when astray, forsaken by reason, and a stranger in my own country, not knowing whether I was in hell or heaven, thou didst assure me that I was not lost ; in thy presence I felt confidence ; in thy safety I saw my salvation.

“The toiling wretch alone, the ignoble husbandman, complaineth of thy salutary beams ! The tyrant swelleth with pride as he watcheth thy lofty course ; the beardless and the grey of ancient times, the young and aged of to-day, have wondered that, besides the earth whereon they dwelt, they should possess thee and thy lustrous train afar.

“Great men have loved to perish in thy presence ; thy rays have cheered their fading vision, and revived the history of nature in their departing spirits.

“The bard hath adored equally thy rising and thy setting glory.

“The philosopher hath descried thy lustre in the moon, thy colours in the leaves, thy pencilings in the flowers, thine attributes in the rainbow.

“And God hath seen thine equals in the fixed stars.

“O, thou, to whom Italy is especially grateful, I thank thee that thou art gracious still as thou wast when first thy course began. Thou hast witnessed more than mind hath scanned, or creed revealed ; thou hast witnessed all my deeds ! Let me not be cut off in my career ; grant that I may pause long ere my day of fate arriveth, that ere I die, I may be tranquil as thou art 'midst all thy glory ; and that I may then regard my life as a history long completed, and forming a necessary part of the past.

“I look on thy tranquillity with gladness : may I in my latter end compare it with mine own, and when satisfied, die in peace.”

While I thus spoke, my eyes were on the burning orb, undazzled by its lustre : nor was this the first time that I had gazed with impunity on the meridian sun. I have reflected on this fact, perhaps in vain ; but the result of my inquiry has originated a belief, that the strong exercise of passion or reason is inimical to the integrity of the senses, and productive of their decline. I



have ceased for years to observe or listen with attention ; and all mental activity has been centred within. As a consequence of this, I have been unconscious of external objects when they have been present, though often conscious of them when they have been absent. When spoken to, I have not heard. But the last sound has lingered on my ear for days, and then suddenly I have replied to it as if it had been just uttered ; and things which I had seen long ago reappeared also, from self-awakened impression, and I have seen them as much as if they were before me. There may have been a lapse of days, and even years, between the reception and perception of the image, and thence have arisen hallucinations on the one part, and absence of mind on the other. For the same reason I have often been unable to feel ; whence I have mistaken statues for ghosts, and women for angels : they have been visible, but intangible.

But these explanations did not arrive to my succour in moments when I was encircled by horrors.

At midnight Pulci renewed his visit to my study. I regarded him at first with looks of surprise, but when his solemn features softened into a friendly smile, I embraced him with the affection of former times, and inquired how he had obtained a knowledge of my return to Florence ?

He looked perplexed, and hesitated to reply.

"It must be fifty years since we last met," I continued ; "but thou art less changed than I. Piety hath preserved in thee the expression of youth ; time hath been careful of thee : but passion and a train of injuries have destroyed my features, that thou canst scarcely know me again."

"Thou hast not forgotten the interesting hours which we passed together last night," said Pulci.

The words brought our meeting to my mind : I had forgotten the midnight conversation.

"Oh ! Pulci !" replied I, "this temple of memory is in decay : but I now remember all. Tell me what led you to the masquerade ; not the pursuit of pleasure ?"

"No, the love of knowledge, and the desire to benefit a friend. I had heard that you were to be there, and sought thee, sheltered in my hood, amid the visored group, that I might receive thy last confession."

"Sweet is the voice of early friendship to the ear of age. Its pure associations give strength to infirmity, and drown the sorrows of later years. Wouldst thou that I should resume my narrative ?"

"If it should so please thee, O Vates ! I shall be a willing listener."

We took our seats, and Pulci resumed his attitude of meditative attention, as I thus continued my history :—

The severe illness which, after my sister's decease, prostrated my strength, and suspended the faculties of my mind, entirely left me, and I was restored to health and vigour. By the assistance of Kunikos, who was peculiarly skilful in tracing the footsteps of fugitives, I discovered that Adora had proceeded from Florence towards the north, to take leave of a relation previously to her being immured in a convent for life. It was ascertained that she had reached Milan, but beyond that city her route had not been traced. Possessed of this information, I resolved to follow the fair fugitive, and if successful in my pursuit, to wed her and retire from the unsatisfactory labours of ambition. I invited Kunikos to attend me, but he declined, for he had views on the affections of the beauteous Leonora, and Angiolo became my only companion.

Having left instructions with Leonora, respecting her treatment of Kūnikos, when all was prepared for the journey, we started in a travelling chariot with six strong horses to drag us over the mountains. As we left the base of the first ascent behind, we viewed with a delight which, like the recurring dawn, is ever fresh to the Florentine, the extensive city of palaces and villas below : for the suburban habitations which grace the vale of Arno and the encircling hills as thickly as the stars gem the heavens, appear afar to be a portion of that city whose centre is Florence, whose glory is the Palazzo Vecchio, the Duomo, the Campanile !

"Beautiful Italy!" exclaimed Angiolo, in a sweet voice, "in what soft sublimity these Appennines appear to rest on thy bosom ! so lightly that, wert thou conscious, thou wouldst be scarcely more sensible of their weight than thou art now. The sun throws his various beams over their velvet hollows, and the shadows of the journeying cloud are like visible breaths of air, which might almost waft the mountains away." It was a true description of the effect which the sun produced on a wilderness.

"Did you observe," resumed Angiolo, "as we passed the cemetery on our left, with its cross in the centre, a labourer mowing the grass between the flat grave-stones? How well does that scythe-armed peasant represent the person of Time ! The bladed grass drops down on the ashes of the dead which nourished it, and is gathered into stacks for food. One season brings the dead to life, another destroys the work. Thus, revolution marks the empire of matter, while scythe-armed Time, the viceroy of Eternity, looks on."

"Who hath taught thee thus to feel and argue?" inquired I, with affectionate interest.

"The great master, who is now no more!" answered Angiolo. "He taught me many things which have inspired me with a love of the universe. To him truth was dear; he was as careful of studying the rights of matter as of mind; and out of what seemed next to nothing, he abstracted the sublimest ideas. He told me that not an atom was ever lost; that though the volcano hurried it from the centre to the surface; though the storm bore it from the Alps to the Andes; though the concussion of worlds might banish it to other planets; though the sun should absorb it into its fiery orb,—its safety was ensured; and though its erratic course endured for ages inconceivable, like the comet it would return to its place at a fixed time, neither sooner nor later, but at the moment it was necessitated to reappear. Though the philosopher could not calculate its time, its mission was stamped by the Creator on its tiny globe, and its restoration would be marked by the same order of things that was present when its career began."

Though I relished not a doctrine which threatened me with a most remote though certain revival of my earthly miseries, I saw that it dealt equal justice to the universe, and an equal participation to all in its almost endless, though oft-reacted events. It might please its discoverer, it might charm those who would devote their lives to its contemplation, it might enlarge the resources of reason, but it darkened the narrow paths which I traversed in my vocation; and I dismissed its promises from my mind. I preferred the more perfect happiness of redemption, and the eternal joys which it promised.

We met but few travellers on our journey. Here and there a cart would creak along, with the muddy carter lying inside at full length, like a large worm asleep or dead, while the horse looked about for amusement; or, suddenly a crew of mendicant children would rush out upon us, open-handed. They resembled forms of mud, which, vivified by the sun, had scrambled out of their native ditch to beg !

It was spring ; but as the evening approached, sounds resembling the voice of autumn were borne in the breeze, and we passed through hills which arose in defiance of the sky, their abrupt summits, and naked crags, asserting the prevalence of an evil power with as much eloquence as the richly-cultivated plains argued the government of a good.

At Covigliaio we ended our first day's travel. On the following morning we started early, in order to reach Bologna by noon. We walked a few paces, while the carriage followed. My fascinating companion placed his hand on my arm and led me on in simple conversation until we reached the cottage of a mountaineer, situated on a humble bank. The old proprietor was working in his garden, and to excite his sympathy we spoke to him of the beauty of the morning and the spring season. He told us that his ancestors had occupied his cottage for ages immemorial, and that the estate bore his family name. If pride is blameable in the great, let it not be condemned in the rustic patrician !

We mounted the chariot and advanced through scenery of a wilder description than we had yet seen. Its antiquity, which seemed ancestral of creation, arrested our thoughts ; and gazing round, we saw beneath us the Lombard plains, and afar off the Adriatic and Tyrrhene seas. But our thoughts were but the false poetry of the mind ; for the soil which seemed the rude parent was the grave of nature, and was composed of shells and sands which had been rejected from the bosom of the distant ocean.

From Lojano, where we saw these things, we descended to Pianoro, and thence through a rich country to Bologna. But in the midst of plenty I forgot not the barren mountains ; and I thanked heaven that the human race was permitted to live in safety among the wrecks of a once glad creation.

We proceeded to the palace of the Counts of Pepoli, whose last descendant was my beloved and respected friend. I loved him for his humanity, and revered him for his genius, which had conferred new graces on the arts and letters of his father-land. He was a man who, to release his country again from thralldom, would have sacrificed the honours which his ancestors had won in repelling the steps of tyranny. Bologna was his dwelling-place, but the world was his home. His palace contained the choicest works of Raffaele, of Guido, of Caravaggio, of Ludovico, Annibale, and Agostino ; but he cared for these treasures only so far as they incited his mind to glory, and his heart to good. His qualities were so great that they endangered his own welfare in threatening to share it with mankind.

On a visit with the family of this nobleman, I found a young married lady, whose husband, the Count di Marsino, was at Milan. She had been at Bologna for her health, and was about to return to her home ; and her friends, on hearing that I was on my way to the north, begged that I would mingle my suite with hers, in order that she might derive the benefit of my protection.

In the expression of the Countess di Marsino's countenance there was little desire of admiration : her mind seemed wholly absorbed in rational pursuits. Although she might be addressed in the most flattering manner, her replies were sensible ; if she betrayed pleasure it was rather elicited by the subject of conversation than the praise. She was lively, and possessed of a wit so delicate, that her railleries were devoid of offence. But in spite of her modest deportment, there was a restlessness in her charms which not only attracted but rivetted the attention of men. With every feature lovely, the most regular teeth, and a winning smile, there was a playfulness of man-

ner in her which kept all these charms in constant motion, and made her quiet and retiring figure prominent amidst the least bashful of her sex. Now, with a sudden but graceful movement of the head, she would regard some inanimate object which attracted no other person's attention; now she would smile at her own thought; now, after a short laugh, she would give utterance to some remark without appearing to expect a reply; and all these graces succeeded one another so rapidly in her, and with so little apparent consciousness of their effect, that it was scarcely possible to notice any one else, or to avoid sympathizing in whatever related to her person.

As I remained a few days at Bologna, I had an opportunity of observing that this lady made a great sensation in society. Love was made to her without mercy, but the married beauty did not seem to perceive it. I remarked that she only looked up when she herself commenced a subject; that when spoken to she bent her eyes to the ground. She appeared to prefer no one, but to be always equally pleased with all: and whomsoever she laughed with to-day, she had almost forgotten by the morrow. But to those whose guest she was, she showed feeling in the presence of others; and this increased the general desire to elicit a like manifestation from the fair one; but she was cold to the stranger.

I saw that my course was to treat her as if I knew that she was delighted at all I said; and by that means I gained her confidence. The weather being most inviting, I proposed to walk with her into the country the afternoon before our departure. The Countess fell into my plan, and we bent our steps towards the Modena road. We roamed beside the barberry hedges, and under the shade of the acacia, blossoming with its white and odoriferous flowers. On either hand we beheld a country overflowing with vegetation. There was the favourite lupin; there the pear and wild cherry gave support to the vine, which, as it hung in festoons towards the earth, wafted the delicious perfume of its blossoms as in promise of autumnal stores of the purple and yellow grape.

Kind and social grew our feelings as we sauntered indolently among scenes so grateful to the heart. The fires kindled by nature in our bosoms could not burn apart; like two flames directing their spires towards each other, they became one.

The day of departure having arrived, we took leave of our friends and proceeded on our way. The Countess and myself occupied one carriage, and Angiolo and the domestics another. No sooner were we alone together than all restraint on her part vanished. She began to converse with the familiarity of a sister. She said that she was only two-and-twenty, and had been married six years. She sighed; she looked at me with melting eyes; she lamented having been misled by passion at an age when innocence was judgment, and childhood was love.

"At what age, then, did you first love?" said I, while an involuntary sigh escaped me, and my thoughts were on myself.

"From infancy to the present hour, my life has been a scene of love,"—and she laughed passionately at the free confession.

"Am I omitted in that scene?" thought I—and I ventured to ask the question of the fair.

"I do not doubt," answered she, "that you have broken many a woman's heart."

I admired her reply, and hoped that it had never been her fate to love, yet be unloved.

"I have not been disappointed," pursued the Countess; "indeed, my mind has been long reconciled to meet whatever may happen. But I am sure that when a man marries young, he, in time, grows indifferent to the beauty and virtue of a woman."

"Great God!" exclaimed I, "is such a thing permitted?" but I secretly thought that it must be true. I did more; I pitied the man who could have cause to be indifferent to woman's beauty and virtue; and felt indifferent, for an instant, towards the fascinating being who had uttered the mild complaint!

Yes! I felt one shade less of deference towards her; though, beholding her beauteous shape, her delicate arm, her smile, so convincing of sweetness, it seemed strange to me that such loveliness could be possessed without affection. But not only the injustice of her lot, but her confession of experience, infected me: she had made the admission, and convinced me that after six years, affection might expire, and beauty cease to please. Her object had been to interest me in her happiness!

But these ideas were evanescent; they did not affect me long, but were exhausted in a new sentiment: they emboldened me to proceed in my inquiries, and taught me to care less for the consequences of my speech.

"Where did you pass your first month of matrimony?" I inquired, with looks of interest most intense; while a sigh, which seemed only second in importance, escaped me.

"At our villa, between Como and the lake of Guarda. At my fifteenth year, I lost my mother: we lived at the Villa Belvedere, on the lake of Como, and there she breathed her last. From early childhood I had been the promised spouse of a cavaliere, and had known the fever of love. His accents seemed to burn in my ear; his looks stole me from myself, and made me only sensible of his manly virtues. But he was too confident in his own powers, for when my mother left the world, I was surrounded by admirers, with no one, except a distant relation, to guide me. Too credulous of my affection, and deeming me too young to marry, my lover did not honour those who were constantly by me with his notice, nor did he hasten to my side. My guardians, fearful that the solicitations of my suitors might mislead my affections, urged my lover at once to secure me as his bride; but he heeded not their admonition, and, as if desirous of convincing the world that I could accept no one but himself, he declined to bring matters to a conclusion thus early, on the plea that I was too young to become a wife. Provoked at his coolness, I wrote him a letter, in which, with reproaches and tears, I discarded him for ever. He saw his error, and came. He earnestly endeavoured to change me; his words were reasons, his regrets were truths. My pride was softened, and when on the point of yielding, a rival entered the room, fell passionately on his knees, and implored me to listen to him alone. I besought both to leave me. The first stood where he was, pale and sad; the other renewed his entreaties, and wept with anguish at my irresolution. I wished that the cavaliere would but draw his sword on his rival; however, he was too placid, too rational to commit his cause to violence. I required a strong proof of his affection and saw it only in the exposure of his life. There was no challenge; and my first love took leave of me, never to return. He has never married, and report says he is miserable to this day.

"The manly assiduity of the Count di Marsino completely gained my heart. The loss of my first lover made me only fonder of my second. I could not bear him from my sight. Our union was opposed; but we met on the lake, and in the fields. At length my protectors dreading a clandestine marriage, consented to our nuptials."

Thus ended the lady's story, and we shortly arrived at Parma. We were preparing to continue our route, when an old priest, who was standing on the steps of one of the churches, warned us to seek immediate shelter. He told us that a hurricane was approaching, such a one as he

had twice witnessed during the ninety years of his life. He did not wait to observe our determination, but tottered into the church ; the office of old age being to advise, and not to watch. We decided to advance, for although the day was more sultry than usual, we saw no appearances of change. But we had not long passed the gates, when it became as dark as night. Alarmed at the sudden gloom, we entered a podere on the roadside, and sought refuge in the adjoining house. The worthy inmates conducted us to their best room, and sent men to take charge of our horses. All was breathless haste. And now thunder and lightning commenced in the ordinary manner, but the reports and flashes rapidly increased, until at last there was scarcely a perceptible interval between each discharge, and the heavens became one scene of illumination, the earth of gloom. This awful appearance had lasted for two hours, when suddenly the wind rushed down with irresistible violence from the Alpine and Appennine ranges, prostrating all that was erect. The cattle were overthrown in the fields ; oxen, horses, sheep, were held flat on their sides by the floods of this air-ocean. Peasants clung to the bending trees to save themselves from being hurried away with the current. Carriages and waggons were scattered along the road. There was a perfect calm before the hurricane commenced : it raged for half-an-hour, and when it had ceased, the like stillness was restored to nature.

The lady was alarmed. When the thunder began to bellow, she clasped her hands together and paced the apartment ; when the lightning began to flash, she started. I placed her on a couch in the corner of the room, and supported her trembling frame, and then at every peal and flash she threw herself in my arms, and implored pathetically my forgiveness. I held her soft warm hand, and she pressed mine continually, in indication of her terror. When the storm was over, she was unwilling to believe that there was no danger. I ordered the carriages, however, and we recommenced our way. But it was impossible to advance, for the road was covered with trees which the storm had uprooted and scattered. We then decided on returning to Parma for the night, and retraced our way. The Countess sat close to me : I felt her trembling form at my side. I passed my arm round her, and encouraging her with a gentle pressure, exhorted her not to be afraid. She softly extricated herself, and with a sweet smile assured me that she was better.

The day was far advanced when we arrived at our hotel. Dinner was served, and we sat down to the repast. I inquired respecting the theatres of Parma, and was informed that the Farnesian was to be thrown open for the performance of a new drama, and that thousands were expected to be present. Time seemed to weigh heavily on my heart in spite of the fascinating looks of the Countess, and the artless manners of Angiolo, and nearly two hours before the performance began I sallied forth, and perambulated the streets amidst reflections which invited melancholy to pre-empt over the counsels of reason. I thought of my frivolity in escorting a woman whom I should never see more, and my want of dignity in submitting to be amused by her coquettish arts. I then bethought myself of Angiolo. I had treated him as an equal, and loved him as a brother. But when I heard his tuneful voice or met his virtuous smile, it was only to see my own baseness in strong contrast with his purity.

I admired virtue unfeignedly ; but, what marked its truth with force, and showed my absence from its path, my admiration was adulterated with envy. I was a lover of good, but having tasted evil, I could only applaud the bliss of the one when I was engulfed in the torments of the other.

I paused before a church ; I looked up at an obscure lamp which hung over the doors. The

miserable beams flickered across an inscription, the letters of which seemed worn out by age, but it was legible to the sinner's eye, for it offered him plenary indulgence. It was the church where I had seen the priest who warned me not to proceed beyond the city. I read the "*Indulgenza plenaria*" with a beating heart : the words were well known to me, they were inscribed on every temple in the land, but I had not observed them in latter years, and when I saw them last I needed little and cared less for pardon. Years of suffering had now softened my heart, and the spirit which once held religious comfort in contempt, was broken down and needed rest. I entered the church, not with a saving faith in human forgiveness, but because indulgence there was offered. It was better to accept it than to nourish defiance : there it was, and there it had been vended for ages. The day still lingered outside, but twilight had entered the holy edifice. I advanced towards the altar, and was met by the aged priest who had addressed me in the morning. He did not recognise me, but demanded my object in entering his sanctuary. I gave him a purse of gold, and said that I was a stranger, that I came to confess my crimes, and pray for plenary indulgence. On hearing this he led me aside, and we perambulated the vast and dismal structure in conversation. I told him the history of my life ; I dwelt especially on my father's curse, Maria's infidelity, Giuditta's fate ; and alluded to the death of Orazio. He gave me back my purse, and led me to the confessional. There, when I had answered many questions, he assured me of a full pardon in return for my dreadful but artless confession : such sincere outpourings of conscience the Church approved. The reverend old man commanded me to kneel before the altar, and having obeyed him, he stood over me, and in a firm, harmonious, and solemn voice, said :—

"May our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon thee, and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy Passion. And I, by His authority, that of His blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, and the most holy Pope, granted and committed to me in these parts, do absolve thee, first, from all ecclesiastical censures, in whatever manner they have been incurred ; then from all thy sins, transgressions, and excesses, how enormous soever they may be, and even from such as are reserved for the cognizance of the Holy See, and as far as the keys of the Holy Church extend. I remit to you all punishment which you deserve in purgatory on their account, and I restore you to the holy sacraments of the Church, to the unity of the faithful, and to that innocence and purity which you possessed at baptism, so that when you die the gates of punishment shall be shut, and the gates of the paradise of delights shall be opened ; and if you shall not die at present, this grace shall remain in full force when you are at the point of death. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The imposing form of absolution produced a more powerful effect on my mind than anticipation could have conceived. If, before accepting pardon, I had doubted its final efficiency, the act of confession and subsequent remission of offences relieved my conscience and lightened my heart. If a man offends a beloved mother, he becomes unhappy ; when he is reconciled to his mother and receives her forgiveness, he is happy again. This is nature ; and the ceremony of the Church being an imitation of nature, its influence on the mind is as effective as that of a mother's pardon. All this I saw, still I felt as if I were forgiven ; nay, I felt that my responsibility was removed ; and that if the priest had not the influence with the Pope, or the Pope with the Redeemer, which was assumed in the form of absolution, the consequences would be visited on them.

The priest hurried away, and I retired from the gloomy haunt of penitence with elated spirits. As I retraced my steps through the silent street, I thought how beneficial my new purity would prove to the cause of truth; how more clear would be my perceptions of the suffering beautiful; how more acceptable my deeds to the hill whence the thunders of tragedy issued, and where the power I worshipped was enthroned.

I was enamoured of the Roman Church. She deemed that the supererogatory works of saints, together with those of the Saviour, were deposited in a treasury which was inexhaustible, the keys of which St. Peter and his successors kept. It was now in my power to increase that precious store of works, and, by the performance of hallowed deeds, to enlarge the resources of the Holy See. It was, probably, reserved for me to eclipse the works of the saints, and finally to discover in the Roman Church the materials of a mighty tragedy! and saw I not hope of such a consummation in the divine grief at the fall and wickedness of man?

Having regained my inn, I had intended to pass the evening in solitude, when I was accosted by a servant, who stated that the Countess di Marsino and Angiolo had already proceeded to the Farnesian theatre, and that a place had been reserved for me. On further inquiry, I found that a new tragedy was to be acted, and that the performers were to be masked, as had been the custom in ancient times on the Greek stage. My informant offered to lead the way, and I accepted his services, not without a sentiment of curiosity.

I was ushered to a place on the lower seats, where my friends sat. The argument of the play was put into my hands. With mingled emotions of grief and superstitious horror I read the following analysis of the piece:—

“Lorenzo, afflicted with madness in consequence of his discontent at possessing the name without the power of his ducal house, on his death-bed curses his only son Urbino; and the latter, soon afterwards, dismissed from the affections of a beautiful female, is driven to the confines of insanity. At this moment, pursued by the Furies, he makes a great complaint to Fate, that his father's unrighteous curse is about to be fulfilled owing to the injustice of a woman, and prays that it may be averted. His appeal is heard; and it is decreed that by offering up a lovely girl as a sacrifice on the altar of love, the rage of Lyssa, the goddess of madness, will be diverted from himself to her head.”

The curtain descended, and as the drama was revealed, a discord deep as doom thrilled through me; a solemn sadness swept over my newly-pardoned soul. There I sat to become a spectator of my own deeds;—the drama was my own. But if I was surprised at this strange circumstance, what was my terror when the chorus of Fates having uttered their recitative, accompanied by the melody of the flute, Urbino, pursued by the Furies, rushed on the stage, masked in the distinct semblance of my features. I saw myself, as it were, delivering the affecting appeal which my pen had traced in the language of my own passions; I saw my own anguish, sculptured by highest art, expressed on the masked face, and so inimitably that I sometimes forgot myself while my feelings entered the character which represented me with striking fidelity.

I attentively surveyed the audience to observe if I were known, but no token of curiosity on the part of the spectators was discernible; no clue to the mysterious device could be obtained. I folded my cloak around my face to avoid notice. And now a fresh cause of alarm broke in upon me; for after the Fates in chorus had urged Urbino to the sacrifice in order that Lyssa



might be appeased, he appeared in a new mask, serene in aspect, and presenting a full contrast to the late face of passion. A similar representation of Giuditta, no less calm, but graced with an unchanging and immortal smile, stood by him. The Fates gently waved their sceptres in symphony to the pipe; the Furies were bound to a distant rock, at the base of which flowed softly the meandering river of Lethe, while Lyssa slept on the margin of its deep water.

The two actors stood like marble forms, and spoke in the sculpture-breathing verse of passion. As the drama proceeded the masks were changed, the tones were more exalted, till at length the terror of the piece gaining its highest pitch, the naked souls of the actors seemed to rise out of their mortal sanctuary and diffuse their terrors over thousands.

Every scene was applauded; the mysteries of the chapel, the benign attitude of Giuditta before the cross, the slow release of the Furies, the awaking of Lyssa from her trance, all elicited deep and reiterated praises. But when Lyssa, urged by the Furies, seized the insensible Giuditta by the hairs of her head, Urbino standing by scatheless, and expressing a lofty despair in his countenance, there was at first an appalling silence, and then a deafening uproar of applause.

I could bear no more; but stood forth with an appeal to heaven, exclaiming—"Thou Power above, knowest thou that I here stand to witness the repetition of this murder applauded openly in the presence of the murderer?"

But my voice was unheard by men; and I saw my object frustrated irretrievably by the pitiless wretches who should have shuddered at human crime instead of deifying the perpetrator, and exalting the art. The event inculcated the lesson that mankind is unworthy of instruction; that philanthropy is a waste of human exertion; that what is designed at immense sacrifice by the benefactor to do good for ever, is converted into the amusement of an hour.

Nearly all the company had retired from the theatre when I rose and proceeded towards the doors; Angiolo and the Countess di Marsino having gone on before. I had not moved many steps, when the sudden appearance of Kunikos arrested my progress. His malignant aspect startled me, and although his manner was respectful, I foresaw that all was not right. An event of importance which greatly affected my interest, he said, had brought him to Parma, and he requested that I would remain with him in the theatre, that he might communicate with me. I acceded to his desire, though not without suspecting him of some evil and desperate intention.

We reached the orchestra, and when alone, he asked me how I had enjoyed the tragic feast which he had been instrumental in preparing for me at Parma? I replied, that I had witnessed the play without emotion, and that it was only with a view to while away an hour in a dull city that I had consented to be present. He wished to know what I thought of the masks, and whether the resemblances to the originals were just. I told him that whoever had executed them had obtained unlawful admission to my cabinet, and that the offender should receive the punishment due to his insolent temerity.

"Then I am that offender," cried Kunikos, while the expression of his face became furious. "Thou wast too powerful for me in Tuscany; but here will I deliver thee into the power of the Church, that thy deeds may meet their reward. Had not the hurricane delivered thee into my hands, I had still arranged that thou shouldst pass the night in the prisons of Parma. I have not forgotten the insult imposed on me at Florence, or ceased to feel the insolence of Leonora's

subsequent conduct. But no doubt thou wert her instructor! To take a full revenge, I have caused the tragedy to be acted which thou hast this night witnessed with so much exultation; and I myself performed the part of Urbino. Thy pride has been raised to the highest; now follows thy degradation!"

He ceased, and pointed to several officials of the Inquisition who had just entered, and I was delivered into their hands.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE dignity of my mind maintained me in mournful silence until I reached the scene of my confinement, which consisted of a vast and gloomy chamber. There I was left in utter and intolerable darkness, and my passion exploded in one of those terrible convulsions which ever preceded some dire act, and was followed by the wandering of my reason from its own to a strange and distant sphere. I threw myself on the ground and cursed the Fates which pronounced that life should be, instead of death; that a universe should exist and not a void; that a divinity instead of silence should prevail.

"O Thou Power!" cried I, "who hadst the satisfaction to discover that thou alone didst occupy the regions of space; that the exercise of thy will was creative, that thy conceptions were not more perfect than thy works! I live to know the greatness of thy independence, the facility of thy wisdom, and the goodness of thy nature! Thou who canst not see like man through a narrow way; who canst not judge according to deceitful circumstance, but art in possession of the reason why things should be; I proclaim myself in thy presence, and I address thee.

"Though disappointed in thy angels who disobeyed thee, who, in contemplating the harmony of thy beauty, impiously wished, but aspired in vain to be thy equals; though grieved at the ambition of man, who, equally with the first-fallen, disregards thy law, and with them struggles in a cause eternally vain;—for how can thy monarchy be subverted, or a commonwealth of souls conduct the government of Nature! Though disappointed in all thy works wheresoever reason prevails, attend to thy servant with a favouring ear; and though thou despisest the devil and his crew, condemn not thy servant Vates!

"In the fulfilment of my divine mission am I cast into prison; in my task of elaborating thought, and building up spiritual strength, am I confined; while labouring to enlarge the boundaries of the soul, and to extend her conquests over creation, that thy glory may be made most evident in thy subtlest works, am I enslaved by the vilest of thy creatures.

"Then, if, in times of old, thou didst lead thy chosen armies to battle against the heathen, I implore thee to sanctify my revenge."

As I thus spake, a supernatural feeling possessed me. My blood seemed congealed, and my flesh quivered. The room appeared in flames. The blaze rushed along the floor, clothed the walls and ceiling with fire, then descended on a long table and was stationary. My first impulse was to revoke the words which I had uttered, but ere I had time to effect my purpose, even in thought, I saw twelve solemn figures dressed in black seated round the table. Writing materials were placed before each, and they attempted to grasp the pens as if to inscribe evidence

on the parchments which were before them. But, to my horror, when they essayed to raise their hands, the flesh fell off them like gloves, and exposed the bones of the skeleton. Having adjusted their skinny gauntlets, they opened their mouths preparatory to speech, but the lips fell from the naked jaws, like the loosened visor of a helmet.

At the head of the table there was a vacant throne ; and, while gazing at this, and wondering for what purpose it was placed there, my glance was fascinated by a face which gradually burst on my vision, the terrible eyes appearing first, and then the other features. When at liberty to move my gaze, I looked down and saw that the throne was filled by a shape appalling to behold. His eyes were like orbs of fire which had been dimmed by gazing with impious steadfastness on the divine majesty ; his brow, wrinkled, like the sides of a volcano, by memorable eruptions of the burning lava of passion, looked like the rock which revolutions had changed only to confirm its power to endure. His stature seemed calculated in strength to contend for ages even with heaven, and was in itself a dominion.

He prepared to address me, and I expected to be stunned by a sound like thunder. But his voice was sweet, and his expression like that of nature at noon-day amid scenes of sublime desolation.

"Thou art cited," said the malignant power, "to answer for thy deeds before this tribunal, appointed in these parts by the church below, to call the virtuous to account for their superabundant works of good. As inquisitors of that church, in which there is no dissent, but whose members work unanimously together for evil, we desire thee, as thou art a true sinner, to confess thy heresy and tell us of what thou art accused. Speak and accuse thyself ; or prepare for the tortures of the damned."

Though my terror continued to increase, I had the presence of mind to reply, "Thou knowest all—I confess—I repent." But as I spoke with mental reservation, I confirmed the lie with an oath.

The inquisitors laughed with such violence that their grisly scalps were displaced from their skulls.

"Dost thou not require plenary indulgence of us?" asked the president of the horrid council.

"I do," replied I, with a firm voice, and still reserving the negative within my mind.

When I had spoken the scene changed to a chapel, the president of the inquisition was converted into a pontiff, his companions into priests. Mass was performed in mockery of the Roman Church, and a parody of the form of indulgence was repeated. But as the blasphemy thus uttered by a malignant power against the Pope of Rome proceeded, my spirit of defiance was aroused, and I contemplated resistance. No sooner did the thought occur, than wrath distended my feelings, and one great passion seemed to rise superior to the whole assembled powers. I rose suddenly to my feet, and cried aloud, "O, Satan ! whence this audacity of thine, that thou shouldst intermeddle in the religious doctrines of heaven ? If thou wouldst establish a creed on earth, select thy prophets, inspire them with thy laws, and through them prove to us thy power to dispose of what thou didst not establish, to destroy what thou didst not create, to render miserable that which thou didst not make happy. In the name of thy ancient conqueror, I thus compel thee to evacuate this citadel of the Most High." Saying which I rushed at the fiend, but was arrested by an arm behind. The means alone, however, were sufficient to determine the event ; for the council dis-

solved itself, and the fiend vanished as gradually as he had appeared, his fearful eyes being the last objects which receded from my vision.

The arm which had arrested me still held possession of my person ; and the room was still illumined. I turned round and saw a man bearing a lamp, at my side. He said that the inquisitors awaited me in the adjoining chamber. I regarded him with a wild stare, and his features brought the fact to my remembrance that a moment before I had seen him enter. The light which he bore, and his black habiliments, had hurried my mind off into the frightful vision which had tormented me, and which at that time I undoubtingly thought was real.

I allowed myself to be led quietly to my trial, for no emotion of fear, as to the result, possessed me ; on the contrary, I was supported by a firm hope, and a confidence which never forsook me in danger. I found my judges seated at a table, with solemn brows, and unbending purpose inscribed on their united aspect. There sat the aged priest who had that day afforded me absolution, and three laymen were assembled with him. His face wore a kind expression, but this was the feature of age, and not of nature ; for the wreck of sternness survived the extinction of human passion ; and on the olden site, religious thought had established the dominion of pity. It was a monument which commemorated the power of reason, which showed how that faculty had triumphed in its severe attempts to attain to the moral end of its being. It was an expression which knew not sympathy with tears, but was enduring, unimpassioned, divine !

The next inquisitor appeared to be a man whose nature might confirm the cold philosopher in his belief, that the mind is formed of matter. He was the hard-headed advocate who is obedient only to the force of circumstances and laws. He held within himself no divine combinations, but seemed as if his conduct must be the effect of causes, as much as the revolution of the earth round the sun is performed in obedience to gravitation. His instructions constituted his rule of life ; had the day of judgment arrived, and man been permitted to employ counsel in his defence against his accuser, this man would, with equal willingness, have defended or opposed the cause.

The third was one of pallid feature and lofty brow, whose powers were of that order which ponders the universe in detail, and never attempts to arrive at those general conclusions which temporarily assuage the thirst for knowledge. But their exercise had been diverted, ere fully developed, from their proper aim, to the investigation of heresy and schism. His conclusions were conscientious, though his function was vile ; and the tears which his scrutinies caused to flow, and the agonies his deeds had produced, instead of influencing his heart, were inscribed on his memory as additions to his knowledge of human nature.

The fourth belonged to that brutal class which carries the analysis of its character on the unaspiring forehead, the restless eye, and hardened features. There wily hypocrisy lurked in the vain search after concealment ; uneasy selfishness was indicated by the shrinking look ; moroseness by the straightened lip. His art was sufficient to win the confidence of the artful, and to circumvent the villain.

These men had nothing in common but their robes of office, which bond of union multiplied the terror of their power. The moment I was commanded to confess my offence, and become my own accuser, I fixed my eye on the priest, and began to repeat the history of my life. But ere I had proceeded far, he told me that I had said enough, and after a short deliberation, probably on the subject of my indulgence, my pardon was confirmed ; and I was dismissed, as having been exempted by the Church from all ecclesiastical censure.

The first person I encountered on reaching my hotel was Angiolo. His joy at my return was as great as if I had been absent for years. He had heard of my arrest; indeed the intelligence had diffused itself through the city. The Countess, on hearing the story, alarmed lest, as my companion, she should become implicated in the affair, had precipitately left Parma, and was supposed to have made her retreat to Bologna.

On the morning following I resumed my journey towards Milan with Angiolo, scarcely knowing my object in proceeding, and yet unwilling to return. The events of the night had saddened my temper; I seemed to be struggling onwards to the attainment of some distant and undefined object, and the further I advanced, the more my difficulties increased; in every step of my progress I encountered new impediments, and instead of seeing, as I once had seen, a halo of glory in the horizon, all seemed gloom; and death enforced its unlaurelled brow on my mental sight as the sole end of my ambition. Already my fame had spread over the republic of letters, but the homage which in earlier life I had pined for, had lost its charm; it was now within my reach, but the excitement was over; the means had absorbed into itself the end, and when the one became exhausted, the other shared its fate. The pleasures of life were extinct, and though revived in pain, they still proved only mortal. Alas! the excitable nature of man is soon benumbed; its first bright ecstasies vanish like morning. The sober mood and philosophic hour refuse their blessing to him who has sailed over the troubled waves of passion in pursuit of a too lofty content; he is destined ever to wander, ever to look afar. He communes not with the day but the morrow; the earth contains not sufficient beauty to please; the ideal betrays his tastes; and in his high estrangement he prefers the works of Phidias to those of God.

Thus the intellect becomes too refined to endure the things attainable, and mourns after unembodied perfection.

In such natures pleasure and youth disappear together. Reflection on the past succeeds; the once joyous hours seem arranged in melancholy array, and are viewed as classical reminiscences of what seemed lasting. But though the lights of memory and the shades of reflection may harmonize thus well, and the mind may have produced within itself a spiritual work of art, the eye turns away from the picture, and the imagination is more than ever discontented.

But excitement, for a time, may still be found in pain, and now it becomes the care of the sensualist to adapt it to the cravings of perverted nature. At first, like poison, its pernicious effects must be avoided by gradual adoption, but it soon becomes a grateful substitute for pleasure, and is found to possess much more power. But there is danger and uncertainty in the abuse of nature, and it leads inevitably to ruin. Great are the sacrifices which it necessitates; the sight of blood, the torture of the stiletto's point, so dreadful as they are, will at last cease to arouse the feelings, and suicide only is left as a means of exciting emotion. It succeeds, and the last awful pleasure which it awakens crowns the history of a wretched being.

These were my reflections as the white heads of the Appennines melted gradually from view, and were succeeded by the towering Alps. And then appeared the rapid flood of Eridanus in view, and at the distant termination of the plain stood Piacenza. As we rolled rapidly along, that town appeared nearer and more near, and soon its distant beauty resolved itself into the foul reality which everywhere marks the haunts of men. We passed through its rugged streets, and continued our journey amid rice-fields, irrigated by numerous canals, and enclosed with hedges

of willow. The narrow waters reflected the calmly descending twilight, and formed a pleasing contrast with the face of nature. We reached Lodi before night, and slept.

While yet in my chamber, seated alone before a blazing hearth, and unwilling to retire to rest, my thoughts ran rapidly over the events which even since my retirement from Florence had occurred in such quick succession. It seemed fated that wherever I went, the history of my life was to be swelled with some dismal page. In the retirement of Lodi I felt scarcely secure from evil, and I shrank from Milan as if prophetically conscious that there I was awaited by fresh disaster. My mind was impressed with a clear conviction that new troubles were prepared, and that I had only to advance to take possession. My recent misfortunes had occurred independently of my assistance, and were greater, especially as relating to my sister's death, than those which I had invoked, and aided. This truth hung over me in terror; heretofore I had practised my science at leisure, not suspecting that I was establishing precedents for doom, and that I was in consequence to be visited in unsuspecting moments with unlooked-for misery. I felt myself unsafe; I longed to resist the tyranny of Fate, but, alas! where were my arms, and how could mortal oppose eternal power? But while thus distinguished by the especial enactments of heaven, I found myself endowed more and more with a new power of defence; I found that I could anticipate events with a degree of certainty which might be deemed prophetic. Created beings which are designed by nature to become a prey to each other, are supplied with the means of escape; the one has swiftness given it to elude the power of its pursuers, it is light of foot, or swift of wing; the other is sometimes encased in natural armour, sometimes prepared with the talon or the forked tongue; and all, when on their guard, may evade the greedy law of Nature, which enacts that life shall live on life.

And since Nature is throughout consistent, I was not ordained to become a lawful prey to misfortune without being endowed proportionably with the means of defending myself. But the law affecting me was high in the scale of cause and effect; my weapon was spiritual; it consisted in that penetrating vision which, from its power of regarding the future, is called prophetic. When I had discovered this, and found the truth confirmed, it was not difficult to see that the germs of prescience had existed in me from childhood; I had been under the operation of that power at the time when a sense of future greatness urged me to seek distinction; it was manifested in my aspirations, and confirmed in my final triumphs.

But there is no faculty of the prophetic kind which reaches the warnings which are issued by the past. That period, like the future, has an interest in the affairs of time which it is difficult to fathom, and impossible to predict. I could often see the future through the present; but as the past is obsolete, I could not foresee its resurrectionary movements or effects on passing scenes. While seated in my chamber, therefore, and gazing on an old arm-chair, I was both surprised and horrified to find it occupied by the tremendous being who had presided over the infernal inquisition. There were fixed his dim-orbed eyes, and there his terrible features; and he sat with the tranquillity of one who was in solitude, and as unconscious of external things and of me, as if his nature were not perceptive, but reflective alone. Even the prophet then was to be circumvented; in subduing the future, he was to be invaded by the past; in fine, there was no safety for ambitious souls, their forward conquests were followed by defeats from behind. Pride and aggrandizement had its limits, and toil only was unbounded.

There sat the monster in reflection, and his thoughts seemed dangerous to my peace. He moved not, but was as fixed as a landscape. I addressed him in a whisper without effect; I called to him unanswered. I drew my sword and endeavoured to irritate him with the weapon, but its point penetrated only an airy phantom. I rose, and with forced courage seated myself on the chair where the spectre was. I met with no resistance, but when seated in my new place, I found him still before me on the chair I had vacated, and still in deep meditation. Stricken with terror, I turned round to avoid the gloomy spectacle of a pensive fiend, whose thoughts were on themes no less than the destruction of all theocracy, whose hopes were atheistic, but whose belief was firmer than the faith of apostles and saints. I turned, but he was before me yet; and by turns every seat in the chamber contained his thoughtful and appalling figure.

I grew accustomed at length to his presence, and giving him back his chair, resumed my former seat. No change in his aspect ensued; no sign of impatience or fatigue. His sole object, as respected me, was to be visible.

I asked him various questions in a satirical and familiar tone, with a view to move him to anger, or to banish him my presence. "Art thou not tired," said I, "of thy mode of life? Thou hast now been at the head of thy degraded administration for ages; thwarted in all thy schemes by superior powers; thy glory perpetually eclipsed; thy plots exposed; thy reputation blasted; thy name despised; and still, for the love of dishonourable distinction, clinging to what seems power; the power of inciting thy betters to successful resistance, and of conferring the benefits of iniquity, if such there be, on the fallen satellites which surround thy throne! Verily, there is greatness in thy endurance, for who, except thyself, is insensible to contempt? Thy companions give thee praise, but thou who couldst deign to assume the serpent's dress in order to seduce a woman, and art insensible to the scoffs of virtue, art surely not penetrable to the praise of those whose nature is less than thine? There is a greatness in thy endurance; and I begin to think that thou wilt persist for ever."

These and other sentiments I expressed, but without effect, and he remained immovable until the light of day penetrated the casement of my chamber.

I felt more tired than ever of existence, when I thought of the unhappy position I occupied in the world. It was true, that retirement was open to my choice; there was my solitary castle or the monastic life, either of which would afford me shelter from temptation, but, oh! the monotony of peace! It was too terrible for contemplation. Was I to proceed to Milan? Could I depend on the fidelity of an enemy's report? Could I expect to recover the lost Adora whom Kunikos had sent me in search of? On the other hand, I was the bearer of letters to the Count di Marsino, whose wife had left me at Parma. Could I deliver these unaccompanied by the lady who had been entrusted to my charge? Could I enter on an explanation of the events which had conduced to her flight? Doubt and difficulty attended on every step I took, but situated as I was, I resolved to proceed, conceiving that whatever might occur would, at least, be productive of some excitement, and probably add new stores of adventure to my already fatal experience. Having decided on my course, I was prompt to execute, and ere I had time to arrange my final purposes, I found myself in the city of Milan.

It is a strange fact, and one worthy of recording, that I could not perform the slightest office until I felt that the time was come. There are men who find occupation for every hour, but these are the patrons of detail, whose deeds are soon forgotten. It is different when principles



only occupy the mind. Then days may pass in apparent neglect, but still the mental process is proceeding, and the object is advanced by the aid of time alone. Where the necessity to act is urgent, the feelings are enlivened ; but where a result is to be determined by the course of events, these prepare the way to success without immediate aid. Had Adora been on her death-bed, I should have hastened to her side ; but now she was only journeying and must rest, the time therefore must arrive when I shall overtake her ; and my future success in the pursuit seemed to acquire dignity by delay. And respecting Marsino, he might be anxious and in doubt, or composed and satisfied ; which, the event would determine. I felt no hurry, but the time might come when I should be disposed to explain matters to his satisfaction ; and, as I never gave reason for my conduct to an equal, the delay was of little moment. It was not haste, but perseverance, which conducted to the final accomplishment of a purpose.

With these views I passed several days at Milan, without quitting my chamber. But before proceeding to my inquiries respecting Adora, I intended to make myself acquainted with the city and some of its monuments, especially the Duomo, which contained the sarcophagus of Gian-Giacomo de' Medici, Michael Angiolo's work ; and the Refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie, on the wall of which Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper is preserved. For it always seemed to me that before entering on affairs in a new city, it is desirable to wear off the feeling of being a stranger.

When I had ceased to enjoy my seclusion, I, one morning, in obedience to the invitation of a cheerful sun, sallied forth into the streets, and told Angiolo to follow me to the cathedral. While standing before the unfinished edifice, and surveying, in its vast proportions, the genius of the architect, I was addressed by a messenger, and presented with a sealed packet. On bursting the envelope I found myself in sudden possession of a challenge from the Count di Marsino. He proposed to meet me at the Forum, in an hour, and to explain his motives on the field. I had dreaded to encounter this man ; he had now declared himself my foe, and his hostile invitation pleased me by dispelling the prejudice which had deterred me from seeking him. Having inquired the distance to the Forum, I sent a verbal acceptance of the challenge, and entering the cathedral, I awaited Angiolo's arrival at the sarcophagus where Gian-Giacomo's ashes slept.

It was not long ere the youth arrived, and having dismissed him to the inn for my daggers, I commanded him to follow with them to the Forum, towards which place I then leisurely pursued my way.

"Am I overtaken at this distance," thought I, "by the arm of Justice? Is Orazio to be avenged in Milan? Does Destiny thus indirectly challenge her rivals?" Though the day was bright, it was a cold, ungenial morning, and the Alpine wind whispered and howled by turns in a strain of dismal foreboding. I believed myself overtaken by Doom ; but is she, thought I, infallible? And analyzing her meaning, and considering her source, I had the satisfaction to find that her utmost rigour was only a preponderance of adverse events in action ; that she might be thwarted by intelligent beings, possessed of power to resolve her force into its elements, and avoid the deep impressions produced by her presence. But though persuaded that I must triumph, my feelings brought with them warnings of so dark a kind that I trembled for more than the result of the coming combat. Beyond it all was mystery ; but in the darkness which thus enveloped me, some bitter and inevitable evil was concealed.

Angiolo overtook me and delivered up my weapons. We proceeded together to the pro-

posed place of meeting. The Count di Marsino was already there, and attended. He begged me to follow him to a neighbouring field, and we passed for some distance along the road, and then entered a cultivated meadow bordered with the acacia and tulip.

"Now, signor, is the time for thee to explain thy conduct towards my family, or perish by the sword!" exclaimed Marsino, and he drew his weapon from its sheath.

"What!" retorted I, "hast thou invited me hither that I may sacrifice my breath in speaking? Prepare rather to quit the world, and to repent thy folly, when thou wanderest in the realms below."

Saying this, I started from my tranquil posture, and expressing victory in every limb, threatened my enemy with my sword. My activity and courage threw him instantly on his defence, and I long retained this advantage over my opponent. My anger subsided as we fought, and left behind it a cool determined resolution to conquer. More than once I could have pierced my foe, but desisted in order to obtain a triumph only after a hard-fought battle. I reflected while I continued the contest, and still deemed myself opposed to Doom, and not to a presumptuous mortal. I cared not to be victorious over man, but to conquer Destiny herself was my aim, and should I prove successful, what a tool, thought I, will I make of this mean world! Nothing then should impede me; nations should feel my terrific power, and sages marvel at the coolness of my undertakings.

Feeling thus, I suddenly sacrificed every advantage, and ceased to fight. "O Marsino!" I exclaimed; "thy time is come, and if thou hast no request to make, or no fond message to thy kindred, prepare thy thoughts to die."

Unhappy man! he was so deeply offended at my address, that he sprang at me with the fierceness of a savage who had never left the desert. I beat his sword from his grasp, and made a sign with my own for him to resume his weapon. The feat I had performed was victory, but the struggle was not over. The pride of my adversary was great; he would not stoop for his sword, but prepared to pursue the contest breast to breast with the murderous poignard. "It was thus," said I, "that I and Orazio were opposed in anger: Fate approves the precedent, and adopts it to avenge my brother's fall! But this steel slew Orazio; this arm directed the blow, and thus I offer up Marsino as another victim." Saying this, I communicated a fatal impulse to my dagger, the point entered, the Count di Marsino fell, and drawing his cloak around him, gathered himself unto his fathers.

"O thou unhappy man!" said I, in funereal oration, "hadst thou been a thinker instead of an actor in the events of time, hadst thou anatomized the impulse which hurried thee into this snare of death, the impulse which seemed natural and just, thou hadst seen that mortals may escape with credit and honour that self-immolation into which they are too often blindly hurried by passion. In what didst thou deem thyself aggrieved? In what hath the Florentine bard offended the Lombard noble? Was thy blood too pure, too proud, to irrigate the broad expanse of reason? was thy nobility and honour in the swelling flood of anger? It is true; thou fallen brave! that emotion, while it lasts, seems just, and incapable of deception; it is true that its proud instalment gives the soul a sense of power before which all nature seems to tremble, and man seems punishable at will! Alas! it is also true that it is too late for thee to hear instruction.

"Thy short career was brilliant—thou art numbered with the dead. Thou wilt live in the

memory of thy generation. Though Reason may frown on one side of thy monument, Pity will weep on the other, and Fame descend on thee with a wreath."

My prospects were changed, but I subdued my triumph in the presence of the dead. I even felt regret, and thought of the sacred law that he who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; and which deserved to be enforced against all but genius; a power which dispenses with the necessity of retribution by the lustre of all its actions. To Angiolo I said, "Depart, my child, and I will return home alone; leave me to my meditations;" and to the friend of the dead my parting word was—"Farewell!"

I wandered from the field in sadness. The preservation of my life was no boon to me, for I had numbered an unhappy mortal with the dead. It no longer seemed to me that I had conquered Fate; I was still in the hands of that irresistible potentate; I had been made only a vessel of his will. Who had dared basely to misrepresent me to the lord of my late companion? What would be her emotion when she listened to the narration of her husband's death? She had heard of the Inquisition scene, she would now hear how Marsino fell. She would naturally find her eyes opened to my character; my fame, which few could appreciate, would be darkened in her sight; she would spurn me for my faults, and deny the existence of my virtues.

The thought of the Inquisition presented Kunikos to my mind in his most diabolical colours. Could he have pursued his hatred to the gates of Milan, and poisoned Marsino's mind? It could be no other; I had inflicted on his vanity a mortal blow, and in my death he sought a cure. For vengeance has medicinal power—it removes the disease of hatred—it repairs the hurts of vanity and pride, where forgiveness has no virtue, and philosophy is unknown.

While thus wandering in thought I was struck to the ground by the blow of a stiletto behind. I felt the hot blood flow, and my senses were dimmed by the cold chill of death. A second blow was aimed at my breast, and I was deprived of my remaining consciousness. When I think of the condition in which I existed, I seem to gain a knowledge, by means of negative facts, of the state of death. Sleep is a state which is understood when it is over; for when consciousness slumbers, life proceeds in its office, and preserves its impressions of slumber for the waking hour, and the soul knows that she hath slept. So when the sleep of death comes and goes, we learn more of the tomb than is known to the undertaker.

My body was discovered by a peasant, and through his zeal was conveyed to an inn in the Forum. The insensibility of my frame continued; my wounds were examined and deemed mortal; and I was given up for dead. The people were allowed to enter the apartment in the hope that some one might recognise the body; crowds came and departed; I was unknown to all. It was about the hour of twilight when I awoke from the apparent sleep of death. I felt as well acquainted with the silence of the grave, as with the sweets of slumber. Through my eyelashes I saw a dense crowd round me; I opened my eyes widely, and saw Kunikos examining my face. All started back; I pointed to my enemy and whispered, "He is the murderer!"

My eyes closed again; I heard the cry, "a miracle!" a scuffle ensued; I relapsed, and heard no more.

For many days I continued in a state of insensibility, except at moments when roused by the torture of my wounds. The first person I saw when my eyes met the light again, was Angiolo. I smiled on him, and pressed his hand approvingly; his eyes swam in tears of affection and

delight, to find that at last there were symptoms of recovery ; and that in the first moments of returning consciousness, I was sensible of his vigilant care.

During a period of several weeks, I lay feeble as a child, and at the mercy of all mankind. Let the fanatic swear that evil is dominant in the world ; let misanthropes denounce their species ; but, judging by myself, I would maintain that benevolence is diffused through the world. It is more equally diffused than riches ; for all men share nearly alike, and thence it seldom surprises by its greatness or splendour. But it exists in every dwelling—it dwells in every breast ; and though sometimes hoarded instead of being spent—though sometimes put out at usury by the miser of good, that its fruits may return in profit, it circulates through empires like the money of the land, and protects the sick and wounded in times of trouble.

This truth I learned on a bed of pain, and to this hour it has never been forgotten. Yes, Pulci, it has pleased the Arbitrator of my lot to notice me in my affliction, and to teach me sound doctrines in the hour of sickness. Though, in the candour of my confessions, I relate the vilest acts and the most revolutionary doctrines—though oftentimes the fiendish joy which in other days I felt in doing wrong, starts into expression, and seems still to linger round the memory of crime—believe me, I am changed for the better ; my infirmities are in daily commune with reason, and both night and morning I pray.

I called not the shaven priest to my bed-side ; for I loved not the class which knows not love for woman, and which owns not parental ties. Nature is dried up in the heart of priests ; the glow of affection cherishes not that soil ; the tear irrigates it not : the seed-time never comes—there is no harvest ! but life is like a river flowing without an ebb, through a sandy desert, into the cold ocean of eternity.

Forgive me while I repeat it, Pulci. It was a class which I never loved, for its laws secluded it from the fountains of humanity. If thirsty, it drank of these by stealth ; it did in secret what nature ordained was honest. No ; I summoned not the priest, lest he should excite my fury, and be driven naked from my sight. But when I prayed I addressed my supplication to the High Priest who reigns on high, not in sentences which need translation ere obtruded on the all-harmonious ear, but in thought, which is itself immortal, and which is the language of the Trinity and the hosts of heaven !

Start not at my boldness, Pulci ! but be content to hear. All that I have conceived and done must be recorded ; all that man can elicit from the mind must be preserved, for the period will arrive when One will weigh all facts and ideas, and the truth will be proved. Not on earth alone, which is so small a portion of the whole. Every star is inhabited ; intellect pervades the universe ; the mysteries of each world will be separately solved ; and as the mental powers enlarge, sympathy will extend, and worlds will learn the truth of worlds. Earth, heaven, and hell, have their historians ; but time is the universal recorder. He now collects facts, he weighs them in the scales in which the materials of the universe are balanced ; he now gathers their value, and writes it on his brow ; and finally the eye of man will decipher the wondrous inscription.

In this great system I have been but a mean actor : but it is not in himself, but in his relation to the whole, that man must glory.

## CHAPTER IX.

As soon as I was able to converse with safety, I inquired after the fate of Kunikos. It appeared that it was he who had stabbed me. Astounded and appalled at my sudden return to consciousness, and at what appeared a miraculous detection of his presence, he confessed his entire crime. After the failure of his traitorous conduct at Parma, and my consequent release, he hastened to Milan, and, with cruel art, poisoned the ear of the unfortunate Marsino with a well-invented tale of my guilt and his wife's dishonour. He watched me to the field, and still foiled in his revenge by my unhallowed victory, he followed me and stabbed me in a solitary place. Partly through curiosity, and in part to ascertain my death, he mingled with the innocent, and was then detected by the eye which he believed was for ever shut. His doom was softened by his confession, and he was sentenced to the galleys to pass his days in labour and chains.

When my affair was first known, crowds of persons were congregated daily round the inn from motives of curiosity, but as the excitement diminished, the numbers lessened, and, at length, two or three individuals were only seen at once. These, either by pointing to my windows, or by other gestures, made it evident that I was the theme of their conversation ; but before I had fully recovered my strength, the street was deserted by the curious, and silence reigned without.

I was desirous to see the Countess di Marsino, who, alas ! had returned to Milan to hear the dreadful fate of her husband. She had been seen in her mourning accompanied by a female whose description forcibly reminded me of my Adora. She had appeared calm, and had derived new outward dignity from trouble. At an early hour every day she attended mass in the cathedral ; all this I learned from Angiolo, whom I had sent daily to watch near the gates of the Marsino palace. I resolved to visit the cathedral myself, and witness the performance of her devotions. I went alone and penetrated the vast and chilly stillness of that universe of prayer ; for so may be named its immeasurable proportions which seem to diminish the greatness of the spirit, and confine it to its house of clay. I traversed its marble plains ; each chapel seemed a sinner's world ; the cupola a heaven. A new monument attracted me ; it was erected in the Marsino chapel. There lay in marble the form of my victim ; and I saw that the breath which the sculptor had infused into it was that of the dying. The agony of departing life was the first and last emotion of that figure ; there it was, a fixed unchangeable expression ; the children of the future would gaze on it as those of the present, and behold it still : the skill of art had arrested the destroyer's arm, but to show only that the fatal deed was already done. I read the short inscription, and remember the words which expressed the fate of the dying marble—or rather of the hidden corpse :

"To the memory of the Count di Marsino, the last of his race. He fell in combat. Eternal peace!"

I entered the chapel and examined every part of the monument. While sadly employed in observing its beauties, the light sound of approaching footsteps reached me, and I retired behind the base of the tomb. A female, dressed in black, knelt before the railings outside—her face was veiled. She was silent for some moments; when she commenced her prayer, I knew by the voice that it was the widow of Marsino. "O thou holy Virgin, 'thou who hast been mortal and knowest the heart of woman, obtain for me pardon for the repeated confession that I love my husband's murderer. I have struggled to banish his memory from my affection; I have prayed that his image might be driven from my thoughts; I have shed the tears of the penitent; but all my attempts are vain. His presence haunts me in slumber, I converse with him in solitude from morn to night; I am his, alas! for ever! O intercede for me with thy blessed Son; gain me support, strengthen my righteous purpose, or my soul is lost.

"In the gloom of the convent I should behold him still; at the vesper hour his smile would reach me; in the hymn of even I should hear his voice; in the dream of Paradise I should walk side by side with him; in the tomb I should hope to rise again in his arms. O thou who once didst love, have mercy upon me; intercede for me with my Redeemer!"

This was her prayer; and having said it, she sobbed audibly and went her way.

While she gave utterance to her pious effusion of love, I was rivetted in breathless amazement to the spot where I had stationed myself, and for some moments I remained fixed to the place. I had become, by the strange concurrence of time and circumstance, the possessor of her inmost thoughts and feelings; she had entrusted her secrets to the air; she had bidden them reach the Virgin's ear, and commended them to her Redeemer; she had called on those powers of heaven to hear and mediate; but I was the hearer—I had shared in the counsels of her breast. I knew not where besides her prayer was heard, but it had been heard by me.

She had made a pleasant revelation!

At the hour of vespers I was in the cathedral again. I knelt before the monument and gazed on the still dying figure. My spirit felt deep sympathy with its expression of enduring agony. The eye was wonderful as if immortal mind had infused its mortal sorrow; the pained features were subdued to heroic magnanimity, as if imperishable thought had been really there; the statue seemed steeped in soul, though soul was absent; the destructible gave evidences of indestructibility convincing enough to satisfy all but the cold philosophers of the race.

It is a great thought to immortalize the dead in dying marble; to show that Death may claim his prey, ever expectant, but waiting ever in vain. It is worthy an art which can give to hope reality; strength to shadow; and glory to despair.

I had an impression that the widow would come and kneel by my side. And when did presentiment delude me? I believed in it; I considered it a spark of the all-prescient Creator. Mind, when created for humanity in the beginning, was not altogether new. It was more compact than its Maker, for it was destined to confinement within a world, but it was of the same divine material. Its prescience extended originally to events near at hand; but the mental darkness in which man has slept for ages, has diminished its powers;—for the unexercised faculty declines. But I was of a disposition not to compromise my human rights; but rather to seek for them in the records of prophets and sages, and other enlightened members of my race;

and when amongst legendary lore, or written traditions, I had examined the documents on which to found a claim, I laid my cause before the courts of Nature, and wrested a favourable verdict from her laws.

Presentiment has never deceived me, for by practice I have become perfect in the interpretation of its signs. Whomsoever I meet I judge of; I question his chances of life and death, prosperity and decline; and of him whose doom is nigh, though his health be perfect, I say inwardly, thou art doomed. If I hear of the sudden decease of one whom I knew well but had not thought of, I feel that I could have foretold it. Pulci! dost thou desire to know what I now foresee? Then thou hast not long to live!

I see by thy smile that thou art doubtful; but thy heart beats high—thy colour changes.

I was right respecting the widow. She came and knelt beside me, but knew me not; for I was concealed in my mantle. I compressed my lip into a smile, and thought myself somewhat more than a mortal.

I was satisfied with the result of my anticipation, and took no notice of the lady. The success of my mental prediction made the scene complete. But on the following morning I was on my knees again before the monument, and so was the widow. Thus commenced a series of interviews which were no less remarkable in themselves than for the scene wherein they occurred.

On that morning I commenced the following dialogue, having partly uncovered my face.

“ Dear, lovely sufferer.”

“ Blessed heaven! It is the Medici!”

“ Alas! it is.”

“ O! canst thou look upon that monument?”

“ Alas! we have been fellow-sufferers!”

“ Thou too hast been on the point of death, and on my account. I thank heaven that thou art restored!”

“ Let us pray for the departed.”

“ O that effigy! it gazes on me with ghastly looks. My beloved husband!”

“ He died bravely.”

“ He was affectionate and pious,”—

“ He is in heaven.”

“ He proved his love by dying, though he falsely suspected my honour.”

“ Such is the fate of thoughtless and impetuous mortals.”

“ He was kind, generous, and indulgent,”—

“ His loss is irreparable, and I—O wretched man!—destroyed him.”

“ O thou wert not to blame. Unhappy woman that I am! how will this trouble end?”

“ Would that I had presented my breast to his dagger, then would my misery have been finished, and thou wouldst have still been happy.”

“ O generous man! but it was never intended that I should be happy.”

“ Thou hast lost a faithful husband, one who loved and cherished thee; and by this hand he fell.”

“ I beseech thee, say no more,”—

“ The monument is a reproach to me: how can I expiate my deed!”

"Thou hast suffered too much already ; thou wilt be happy in other lands, and far away from this scene : I shall be henceforth wretched, solitary—"

"Perhaps thou canst never love again ; but thy virtue will be a reward, and thy calmness will reconcile thee to thy untoward fate."

"Never, never ! O Vates, thou dost not know me, or thou wouldst not draw a picture which presents so sad a contrast to my despair. Alas ! I am but a woman ; it has always been my fault to be too confiding."

"I know thy inestimable character ; I know thee better than thou knowest thyself. What ! thou who weddedst at a tender and susceptible age the object of thy choicest affections ; who in the bloom of youth hast been deprived of all that made life delightful, canst thou be happy more except in the tranquil recollection of a once glad home ? No ! it is only in memory that thou wilt find the peace of the future !"

"My tears will flow ; I cannot arrest them. Unhappy woman ! unhappy day !"

"Give me thine hand, and tell me if what I have said is not true."

"Look at my tears ; and they will best answer for me !"

"Beloved woman ! Look up at this monument with those tearful eyes ; regard the countenance of an indulgent husband ; read the thought which veils his features with agony ; think that his soul is present with us, and sees our inmost thoughts before they have time to be spoken, and then tell me if, in thy widowhood, thou hast a greater consolation than to recall his sacred virtues, and mourn his irreparable loss."

My words convulsed her frame ; she sobbed aloud, and wept with the wail of the destitute ; and rising, left the spot in a state of mind too bitter for description to imitate. I continued on my knees until she had reached the doors, and then arose, somewhat reflective,—but I could not grieve at what I had done.

Be not angry, Pulci ! for I see thy countenance changes with indignation. Old age has been to me a period of active repentance. My misdeeds have established a purgatory within my soul, which torments without consuming, which swallows up every wicked thought by turns, and gnaws away the evil which is wove into its spiritual texture, and after its purification still retains it in torture. Conscience is the seat of this unquenchable volcano ; it is situated among the brightest prospects of a pensive soul, where the sun of imagination rises and sets in its diurnal course, but without cheering hope or reviving decayed emotion. I shall know no respite in this world, for repentance once necessitated comes into being and never dies ; and repentance itself is pain, and its only pleasure is in melancholy reflection. O ! if I could live again, I would imitate the calm of spring and the beneficence of summer ; my life should commence in filial duty, and end in paternal love. I would sacrifice my interests for the individual and not the race ; my friends should be chosen from among my kindred ; I would not offend against the state or its rulers, but be grateful for the wisdom of my ancestors.

You perceive that I can weep ; it is a weakness of old age to shed tears in the rehearsal both of its former triumphs and sorrows.

"O Vates !" said Pulci, "if the history of thy criminal life can elicit from thee such sentiments as thou hast now expressed, thou hast it in thy power to benefit mankind in thy latter end. For the young sometimes benefit from the lessons of age. Thou hast shown the fallacies of ambition, how every false aspiration must ultimately fall from its precarious height into an un-



fathomable gulph of disappointment. Thou hast proved by thy moral failures that excitement ends where it began, and that it is worn out by its rapid movements : having finished its confined circuit, it is without an object, and becomes the prey of disease. But deceive not thyself in thine old age ; for though repentant, thy memory is as full of iniquity as thy life has been. Thy period of action is over, but passion survives ; and probably if thou hadst strength to act, thy will would not restrain thee. It is an awful thing, remember, to have been created after the image of God, and to die resembling the devil."

I wept again.

" Pulci !" said I, after a few moments' pause, " I bless thee and thy holy Order, and in testimony of sincerity, I promise that when I have brought my sad confessions to an end, I will proceed with thee to a public notary, and leave all the money that I can command to the Franciscans. Say not a word ; I have promised, and it shall be done."

" I begin to think," said Pulci, " that thou hast been permitted to live for a righteous purpose, and that thou hast been chosen as a distinguished example of how great a sinner can be saved."

" Go on, I pray thee," continued I ; " for thou art the only comfort of my days. Tell me how to effect the consummation of so blessed a result ?"

" Continue, as thou hast begun, to confess freely, and then submit even thy memory to those fires of conscience which thou hast described so eloquently, and finally, pray without ceasing." Such was the holy advice which I received, and thanks to the Spirit of Truth, it hath not been ineffectual.

You will doubtless have observed, continued I, that when once the theories with which I started in my career had been put in practice, they were, after a time, absorbed wholly in action. I had less occasion to observe my emotions as I advanced, because they found through the prior experience of theory a ready appreciation. They knew their place, and recorded themselves. What is also remarkable, I ceased also to preconceive my crimes, as if assured that Nature was reconciled to my views, and would supply me with the means of action.

New theories sprang up out of the facts in which old had been merged, and anticipated in their turn the production of facts superior in their kind to those which immediately preceded them. Of this truth a pleasing example occurs to my memory in relation to my present subject.

When I had ascertained the movements of the widow of Marsino, I resolved to accost her in the public way ; but from a cause then concealed from my reason, but taking an active part in my feelings, I found myself irresolute from day to day, and unable to effect my purpose. This mental phenomenon excited my wonder, and I determined on effecting its analysis. On comparing it with similar states of mind of a prior date, I discovered that it related to place. In the instances of Giuditta and Orazio, I remembered that with the first I had unconsciously preferred the sanctity of the chapel for the place of the principal scene ; the expanded floor and decorated walls formed a part of the perfect idea. With the second I had selected the court of my palace and the open sky. In my descriptions I had never adopted the close cabinet or narrow way, but had struggled to select the marble-ornamented chamber, or the landscape which a Salvator Rosa might have chosen. The attainment of my latent object, however, was attended with the painful obtrusion of meaner scenes on my fancy ; and while I resisted them, I sometimes hesitated to proceed in my higher choice. It was clear, then, that I was suspended between the instincts of

pure taste and reason ; I was on a crisis wherein harmonious impulse, whose pure analysis had been delayed, had gained strength by repeated action, and when the opportunity occurred, had asserted its claim to be enrolled among those principles of reason which administer the laws of beauty. Taste refused to accept the public way as a stage for the tragic scene, and reason admitted the right.

Even in my descriptions of disorder I had ever obscurely sought for some feeling of harmony which might connect the cavern or the wilderness by some distant links with the great chain which binds the laws of order ; this was from the same impulse of intrinsic harmony, the laws of which had not been rationally developed within me, and which, until fully understood to reason, were ever liable to violation, and dangerous to the success of sound classical results.

The suggestions of feeling, however correct, fall far short of the convictions of reason, and their effects are proportionally obscure in composition. The law once discovered, I found a knowledge of it essential to that aristocratic temper of mind in which works of highest art are produced.

And now, no longer embarrassed by the undefined struggles after perfect beauty in all the relations of a picture, I decided at once on the Marsino chapel of the cathedral, with its central monument, as the fit scene of my next attempt at dramatic study. The architecture was perfect, and one or two figures outside, in solemn converse on the monument within, would give life to the inanimate scene. The full development of this law has led to my greatest triumphs ; and in since searching the works of authors, I have found that successful writers have been under its influence in their finest conceptions ; and that the Greeks, whether from imitation, feeling, or reason, never wrote a line in violation of its precepts.

But, at the time that this new light shed itself on my understanding, I made a very different discovery in the metaphysics of composition, which threatened a fatality to my prospects. I found that the cruel practice of my art had gradually ceased to produce the excitement which had at first sustained me in my perilous career ; and that I began to look on the various changes of suffering with indifference. This alarmed me ; but on examining myself, I ascertained that the cause of it was most satisfactory. I had collected within myself the richest stores of knowledge ; and the facts which I had treasured up were arranged in my memory with as much care as the figures and groups are distributed in a gallery of art. There is a time when the collector of marbles feels disposed to relax in his pursuit, and to deem his collection perfect. So it was in my case. In viewing the contents of my spiritual gallery, I saw its deep avenues filled with choicest works of thought : there every shadow of death had form, and every feature of terror, grief, and despair, was imaged. I saw only one vacant recess, and that was destined to hold a colossal figure, which should harmonize with the rest, but be the most perfect of all. This was to crown my experimental toils ; and whatever might afterwards present itself, would be necessarily absorbed into this concluding work.

If the artist who hitherto had sculptured his works in stone had suddenly discovered the pure marble of Paros, his pleasure could not have been greater than mine when I learned of what material my next work was to be formed. The labours of my past days had been spent in emotion ; all that I had done had feeling, but the time had come when my toils were to be only intellectual. Pure intellect was to be the material on which my future energies were to be spent ; and the manner in which I proposed to effect this favourable change, I will relate to you before

I proceed with the history of the widow of Marsino, as the mental revolution to which it conduced arose out of my second interview with her in the Duomo of Milan.

I have already said, that my excitability diminished in a manner which alarmed me. This I first observed distinctly when I saw the widow's grief at her husband's tomb. The outburst of her feelings in which that scene terminated, had no effect on me. I had seen nothing like it since Giuditte's time; but when that angelic being threw her anguish into my arms, and wept on my bosom, I shared the terrible emotion: now, however, I felt no pity where I stood by the side of anguish not less intense—I observed it; but it was only a duplicate of what was already treasured up in my mind, and it seemed not worth the pains of recording. I soon learned the reason of this. I saw that one good specimen was sufficient for the wants of the poet; but, thought I, if the duplicate has not the power of exciting the mind, in what consists the virtue of the original? And I pondered the anguish of Giuditte, and found that I was still unmoved. But while insensible to the memory of pain, I saw that pain more vividly: it appeared embodied in an intellectual form, and was as palpable as when Giuditte had stood before me in life. I saw it—the vision was perfect, beautiful, and pure; it portrayed the shape which by anguish is assumed, but the anguish was cold and classical; the fine ideal was left alone; that only remained which could not change or perish.

The truth was evident; feeling, which is ephemeral, had been absorbed in intellect, which is lasting; the mortal had merged into the immortal.

Thus was made the discovery of the highest law of art, and I began to reflect whether its application was not universal. I had travelled over the world of passion; I had suffered more even than I had witnessed of suffering; I had almost rent my soul asunder in the conflicts I had endured with hatred, jealousy, false hope, contempt, revenge—I had run the race with Nature in the tempest; I had equalled her in her love, her brightness; I had dwelt in her most peaceful mansions. These great and terrible reverses were more than one mind could bear, and consequently, I sometimes felt myself in the midst of the whirlwind, unable to arrest my course, and sometimes wandering without my reason in the plains of eternity. It was time to enjoy tranquillity or to die; I could bear no more to be buffeted by the contending influences of things. But Nature is conservative, and she not only arrested me, but led me to the seats of divine philosophy. She told me that I need endure no more anguish, but that having passed through the dread ordeal, I might henceforth observe with intellect alone, and by degrees merge the activity of feeling in that pure and placid power.

And now, in the pride of my heart I saw in life a peaceful scene; I thought that I had reaped a fortune of glory—that I should enjoy the fruits of my labours in an earthly paradise. O Adora! thou whose image reigns within my heart, what prospect is there, thought I, of peace except in thee! If I am to attain to the possession of pure delights, let thy soul reveal to me where thou art to be found, and I will seek thee, though it be beyond the mountains or the seas.

It was in the cathedral that these reflections came across me; but lost in a species of ecstasy such as encircles and almost realizes hope, I had forgotten where I was. The horrid monument was before me.

“O thou thoughtless fool! O Marsino! why didst thou rush into destruction? Behold the misery thou has entailed on thy wife and thy murderer!”

I looked down, and saw that the widow was there. The theory which had so recently been

developed, and which proposed to intellectualize all emotion, was now, for the first time, put to the test of practice, and it failed. But its want of success arose in part out of facts favourable to its future triumph; for I was enraged to find the widow there—she whom I now disliked, and who stood between me and Adora, in whom I sought the intellectual peace to which my reverie alluded. I desired to be calm, but strove in vain against an overwhelming impulse; I endeavoured to leave the cathedral, but when I looked at the chapel, I saw figures wandering like shadows round the monument, and making signs for me to advance. I could not resist their influence; but when the widow saw me, I was seized with fury, and I expressed the most fiendish sentiments of my breast.

“Thou woman!” exclaimed I, “I know thy false designs, and hate thee!”

“Gracious powers!” answered she, “what words are these I hear? I am lost for ever and ever!”

“The dead hated thee!”

“Alas! would that he were here to save me!”

“Behold him!”

“O Vates! hast thou no pity?”

“Thinkest thou that I, whose affections are concentrated on a being of the most perfect beauty, can love a woman who hath been possessed and neglected by another?”

“O Vates! my heart is broken!”

“Let the man who broke it provide for it an urn!”

“Whither, O whither can I fly for peace?”

“Art thou the love-sick virgin of Como’s lake, that thy tastes should be so select and lofty?”

“Whither, O whither can I fly!”

“If the cypress shade be too sombre, attend to the convent bell.”

“My resolution is taken, and I will die! Help me, O help me, my Redeemer!”

The last words she uttered with a scream which summoned from behind the tomb those shadows which I had before seen, and which now appeared like the Furies who had acted on the Farnesian stage. They came, one holding bread, another wine, while a third poured poison into the chalice, and urged me to offer it to the woman, while a voice uttered, “Let her drink and die!” I tremblingly advanced my hand to take the cup, when the same voice said—“To-morrow, at the Refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie, there should the last be given!” and they vanished behind the tomb.

“Didst thou hear?” exclaimed I. “I see thou didst not. Then meet me to-morrow by twilight at the Refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie!”

I said, and disappeared.

My mind continued to wander after the image of Adora. The instant that her form was within view of my inward vision, a deep calm came over me, and poured into my breast the joys of a world to come such as I had felt in childhood on a summer’s eve at the hour of music and prayer. She seemed a divinity omnipresent in my mind—the director of its laws, its pervading providence, and the fountain of all hope and love. She seemed a divinity who ruled only the pure and perfect, in whose empire there was now no rebellion, no seat of the fallen and unhappy, but one extended scene of wisdom. If evil had ever prevailed within her beauteous dominion, her influence had charmed it into slumber; she was all-harmonious, and her resistless virtues seemed the fine ideal of attributes divine, as if selected from the grand admixture of good and

evil which controls the outer universe, and stationed within an immaculate world of spirit, to govern the lovely, the calm, and the immortal.

My love was not like that of man, which grows out of habit and familiar converse, but it was adoration, innate, religious; and its hallowed glow was the contemplation of an object which was afar—of beauties which lingered on the horizon of a distant heaven—of charms unapproachable except to hope and fear. My love was a life of pensive prayer; of thought ever dwelling on its idol. It was a madness calmed by the presence of its saviour, and suspended in an ecstasy of delight.

Such was my love for Adora, whose face once only I had seen; but when I saw her I remembered my prophetic vision of her beauty in the caverns of the Volterrana, and my then sweet emotions were renewed never more to disappear. From that hour she had sat by me in my chamber, and walked by my side in the balmy air of the vale. At night she had slept on my pillow. She had never deserted me except when chased away by my despair.

With my eyes fixed on the ground, the hours passed like moments, while my mind was stationary on Adora. But like all my states of feeling, this increased in intensity, until its electric touch thrilled on the perilous and elastic chords which reason could not harmonize, and whence no sweet internal melody could be drawn. The depths of my mind contained an ill-accorded lyre, and like the Æolian cave, which resounded not the gentle waftings of the breeze, but once disturbed, disgorged the hurricane, this thought-strung instrument of frenzy, aroused by the fatal touch of passion, echoed it in dissonant ravings, and awakened the frightful spectres which slept in the dark recesses of the spirit.

The time was, when, through pride, I studied to conceal from the eye of man those dismal regions of my inward being, but it is no dishonour to resemble Nature in all things. She has her haunts of eternal winter, where devastation exists alone; or if life springs up within them, it is monstrous and unnatural. And these fearful wilds are often in the midst of her most cultivated places. This is the insanity of Nature; and it is only her loftiest sons who are created after her, and can reflect her entire proportions.

The whirlwind uproots the mountain pine, and bears that colossus through the airy plains; it diverts the cataract from its fall into the chasm, and hurries it in spray to the passing clouds; it drives the rivers back on the swollen rills; it devastates the works of summer. So in the mind insane, the unbound fancy uproots the tree of knowledge, drives the flow of passion into cloudy regions, arrests the tide of feeling, scatters the associated thoughts; and all is thus mingled in confusion.

While my feelings and thoughts were yet on Adora, a sacred edifice appeared, not the Medici chapel, but the Marsino and its fatal monument. The Furies haunted it with the poisoned chalice and the bread; their cry was—"Remember the morrow!"

But now, instead of the widow alone, I saw Adora also. They both lay entranced on the pavement, and between them was the chalice with its contents spilled. Still I heard the words, "Remember the morrow!" and I felt impelled to the performance of some fatal act with the words still ringing in my ear.

Unable to move, I looked at the tomb, and saw it guarded by an angel who brandished a flaming sword. It was Giuditta! She noticed me not, and a voice still said, "Remember the morrow!"

I remained in a delirious trance for a long time, while glimpses of the vision recurred ; but they grew fainter every time. In this state I had remained for many hours, when suddenly I strove to resist its influence, and to avoid some terrible catastrophe towards which I seemed violently impelled. I called to Angiolo, and found him beside me ; I looked about, and saw that a new day was far advanced.

“ Let us instantly leave Milan,” I exclaimed, “ for evil pends and must be accomplished if I remain. Prepare to depart—in one hour we will quit this fascinating city. I will seek the open air ; follow me with the chariot and the driver.

The night was falling as I spoke—I rushed from the locanda, and was soon at the doors of the Refectory. I had not sought that place ; and when I arrived there, I held a cup in one hand and bread in the other. The widow was there ; she was contemplating the immortal work of Leonardo da Vinci which had been so long an object of meditation to those who had daily ate and drank within that chamber, to the pious recluses of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie. When I saw her, I knew by what impulse I was driven ; for my father's blood was rushing madly through my veins. I poured poison into the cup, and broke the bread.

I held out the cup, when the twelve disciples rose from the table of the fresco, and from behind them came Giuditta with a flaming sword, and dashed the cup from my hand. It fell ; the widow had already fallen, and turning round, I saw a female enter the Refectory. It was Adora !

“ It is He !” she said, raising her arms to heaven. Having uttered those astounding words, she swooned and sank on the earth by the side of the widow of Marsino.

I stood for a few moments with my eyes on the two women, and on the cup which lay between their forms. Giuditta had vanished—the Figures in the Fresco were tranquil—and now I stood in the Refectory over the Countess di Marsino and Adora !

In such a situation even the common mind can in a few moments perform the operations of hours, but the prophetic can scan years of the future. I saw into my own land which was afar ; I saw into distant time, and read events which have since been fulfilled. Adora was with me in the Volterrana, the affectionate, the faithful ; she was long the witness of cold, intellectual crimes, and, finally, she fell the victim. All that surrounded me, in its turn, I saw swept away, all save desolation ! I was again the wanderer in foreign lands, but amid scenes of revolution. I was then bound in the chains of the dread asylum, oblivious of the past and present ; all this I suffered, though not to die, but to return again to places which time had scarcely changed. But oh ! how changed was I !

Adora ! a strange destiny attended on our union ! I loved thee before I possessed thee as mortal never loved ; and I mourned thee after thou hadst departed : it was only possession that tired !





































































